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SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs

Roughly about half the witnesses were sure they saw planes in the sky...The other half saw nothing. The elevation operator of an antiaircraft director looking through his scope saw many planes. His azimuth operator looking through a parallel scope on the same instrument did not see any planes...Once the firing started, imagination created all kinds of targets in the sky and everyone joined in.

Colonel John G. Murphy writing about the 'Battle of LA" in 1949

Volume 3 Number 1 January-February 2011

The people have spoken

At least the people of Denver have. When Jeff Peckman put his "Initiative 300" on the ballot last November, it was basically a trial balloon on how people felt about spending tax dollars on UFOs. Peckman stated that it would not involve taxpayer money but the voters thought it might and they responded by voting "NO"! I comment on this in more detail on page 16. Pay attention UFOlogy.

SUNlite has received some criticism from several individuals who seem to have biased opinions about the subjects I have written about. I used to have a section called "e-mails to the editor" but I took it out when the e-mails dried up. If people have a specific comment/item they want corrected, it is not hard to contact me via e-mail (tprinty@comcast.net). I will correct any mistakes regarding something factual. However, interpretation of facts is another thing and I may disagree with an argument based more on belief than facts.

Speaking of errors that need correcting, Martin Kottmeyer received some feedback that he was wrong on a point in his piece about the Arnold sighting. Mr. Kottmeyer acknowledges that he made an error when he stated that the objects traveled in a "V" formation. He misunderstood the term "echelon" and interpreted it to mean "V". Apparently, Marty got this impression from secondary sources such as the 1995 History Channel documentary, "Where have all the UFOs gone?" When he was contacted concerning this error, he checked the primary sources and discovered his mistake. He was upset that he had made such an error and I am as well for allowing the error to appear.

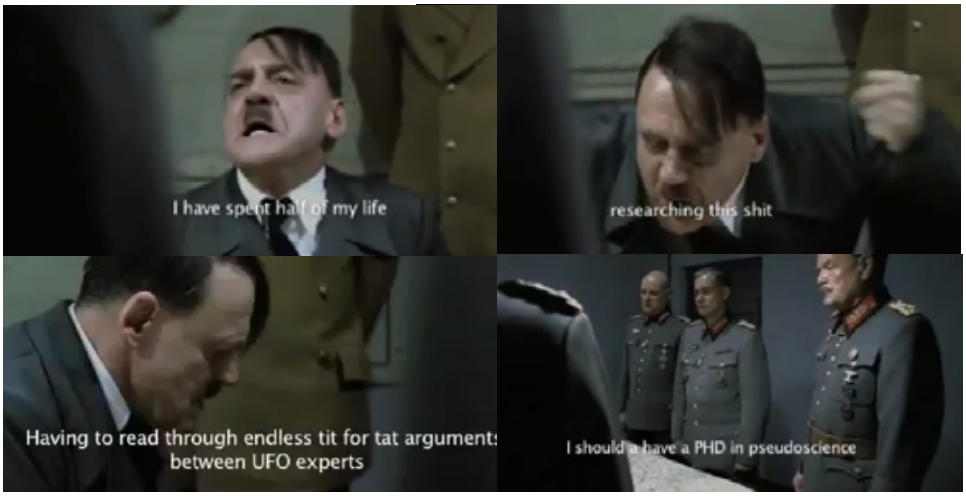
In other news, I noticed that my last IFO university article could have applied to several prominent events in November and December. There was a UFO event that turned out to be a RC airplane with LEDs, one involving airplane landing lights (as solved by MUFON), and a UFO photograph submitted to MUFON that looked remarkably like an aircraft seen from a distance. There was also a case of an airplane contrail causing quite the controversy in the media. Three of these are mentioned in this issue.

The New Zealand government released its UFO files in late December. As usual, there was no smoking gun. However, it is interesting to read the documents about the December 1978 Kaikoura UFO case.

Last issue, I gave a brief review of the Rendlesham case but Ian Ridpath's work should be considered the primary source of information on this. His presentation at the Unconvention 2010 was outstanding and worth watching. Ian also sent me an e-mail about a meeting attended by Burroughs and Penniston in Woodbridge to "reveal the truth" . Those showing up got to view a new History Channel video on "Ancient Aliens" and were told that Penniston's "magic notebook" contains a secret code he obtained from the "object" that was in binary. I wonder why this is suddenly revealed 30 years later? Didn't we understand binary in 1980? Things that make you go hmmmm....

This month's issue has some interesting contributions from various people. Peter Merlin's article pretty much confirmed what I already knew about the "Area 51" show. He had confided with me previously about his experience with it. It sort of gives you an idea how many of these UFO shows are probably produced. Peter Brookesmith's submission provides the reader with another aspect regarding the Rendlesham case; Matt Graeber provides us his views about UFOlogy's dark side; Roger Paquay provides some interesting information regarding media influence on the Belgian UFO wave. It adds to the piece last issue written by Jean-Michel Abrassart. I publicly like to thank them for their efforts. I hope the readers of SUNlite appreciate them as much as I do.

On a humorous note, I would like to point out this link to an amusing video clip.It is a video clip that has been used by various people to create parodies of just about everything (including a parody about all the parodies!) and comes from the movie "Downfall". I put in a few frames of the video here that I thought was applicable to many individuals I have encountered over the years when discussing UFOs.



The cover image was taken from the cover of the Coastal Artillery Journal of July-August 1942. This issue spends some time discussing the infamous "Battle of Los Angeles".

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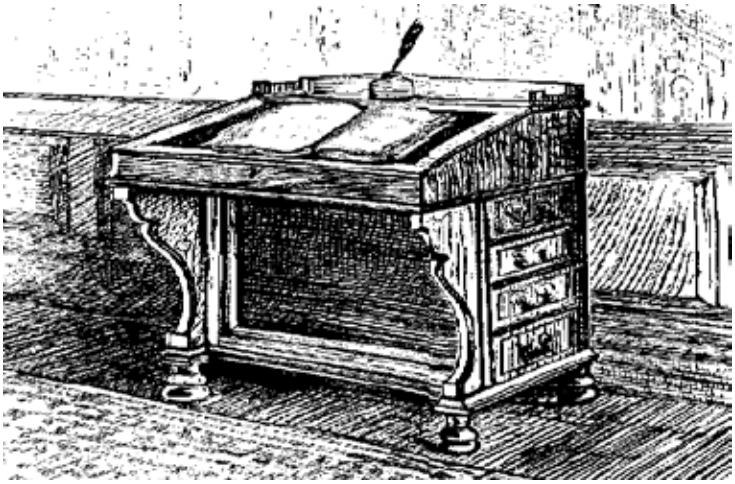
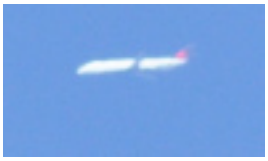
Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions

The UFO Examiner revealed he now has a UFO alert condition system. I am not sure why. It does absolutely nothing since UFO groups don't proactively look for UFOs. If these UFO groups were really interested, we would see UFO watches and video systems set up to capture these UFOs. Strangely, or not so strangely, astronomers' all sky cameras have yet to report recording any of these UFOs in these high alert areas.



As always, the UFO Examiner has all those UFO reports that have yet to be investigated and nobody hardly ever reports on the MUFON investigation results (although he did reveal one Colorado investigation that was really easy to solve). For instance, nobody seemed to bother to investigate the "white cylindrical object" over the Illinois skies on October 27th. The witness stated between 10 and 10:30 he saw the UFO going north. He took some photographs and one showed the object which he described as being white with a dark middle band and end. He also added it had no wings. More careful observation of the image reveals what appears to be an MD-80 or 90 type aircraft. The dark middle band is the underside of the wing (see a comparison image I took at left). One can even see what appears to be the rear engine near the tail section. The general description of the location appears to be west of Joliet, which is southwest of Chicago O'Hare airport.



There were other cases that were fairly easy to solve but the image taken of "orbs" and a rainbow just amazed me. A high resolution image clearly showed the orbs were likely seagulls. Does the Examiner bother to even look at these cases or does he simply post them to fill up space?

Frank Warren posted a photograph of a UFO over Knotts Berry Farm. The photographer initially thought it was due to glare but then concluded there was nothing to reflect the light. However, the photographer and Frank Warren did not consider an internal lens reflection. The UFO is a diamond shaped red object. Just to the lower left of this object (and roughly the same distance from and opposite the center of the image) is a very bright streetlight that is a square shaped (but appears diamond shaped when viewed from the angle in the photograph). It is very likely that this UFO was an internal lens reflection.

Kentaro Mori indicated that the Varginha case was potentially solved. The case involved some girls seeing an alien creature that eventually expanded into a crashed saucer retrieval. I don't think many UFOlogists gave it any credence but Mori's article points toward a possible solution. A man called "Little Luis", who suffers from mental problems, lives on the streets in the area where the "creature" was seen. The photographs of Luis "squatting" (which is how he sits) is a remarkable resemblance to the drawings of the creature.

A blue UFO was seen in Centreville, Virginia. Someone managed to record it with their cell phone camera video function. It was quite the case until a local news station revealed the source of the UFO. Tony Claridge was flying his remote controlled aircraft that night and it is decorated with blue LEDs. I recall that I read somewhere that these kinds of things could produce UFO reports.

Billy Cox seems gullible enough to believe Steve Bassett's claim that for just $250,000 dollars, the "truth" about UFOs would be revealed. Cox reports that Bassett implied that President Clinton was going to disclose the truth about UFOs but was halted by the impeachment hearings. I am not so easily sold by Bassett's bogus claims. This is the same guy that has basically gone bankrupt with his X-Conference adventures. Can you really trust somebody who can't even do something as simple as balancing his books? We have had a lot of these press conferences with witnesses presenting their "I know what I saw/heard" stories. Nobody seems to care other than UFO proponents, who like to proclaim that this presentation will be the one that reveals the "truth" about UFOs. If Billy Cox really thinks this all will happen for a meager $250,000, I suggest he start a fund to get this started. If 10,000 people donate only $25 each, it would not be hard to come up with the cash. Like the Denver ET Commission vote, I suspect such a call for funds would receive a weak response.

Billy Cox also complained that SETI's podcast interview with Leslie Kean omitted discussing details about the 1989-1990 Belgium UFO case. I wonder if Mr. Cox (or for that matter Leslie Kean) have ever examined ALL the information regarding these cases. Cox talks about an analysis but I think he is only parrotting what General De Brouwer wrote in Kean's book. Missing is any mention of Messen's later analysis and the analysis of Salmon-Gilmard! Cox is complaining that people are concealing the truth but chooses to conceal information that is vitally important to understand the case.

Anthony Bragalia seems to think that people have a hard time accepting the idea of extraterrestrials in his blog posting of why "you" can't accept them. He uses the "race" card (we can't get along with each other) as the reason why ET would not bother to make "open contact" with earth. He implies that "many" on

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

earth would probably reject or abhor ET. It is nice to know that Bragalia finds himself enlightened enough to inform us on how the majority of humans relate to each other. One would think we would have killed each other off by now because we don't like the way somebody looks or acts. That may have been the case a century ago but what about today? In most of civilized society people of different races and ethnicity's work together. During my time in the Navy, I had two commanding officers who were different races. One is a Vice Admiral today. His statements appear to be directed at skeptics because they supposedly could never accept the existence of ET. His implication is incorrect. Skeptics and scientists would be more than willing to accept an ET presence. They just are not willing to accept the sloppy research and wild speculation prevalent in UFOlogy as evidence for the existence of alien spaceships.

Anthony Bragalia then spent some time talking about the "Interplanetary Phenomenon Unit" in the US Army sometime in the 1940s and 1950s. The "unit" was disbanded after that. We know it existed based on the documentation available. However, what it discovered seems to be lost as the records no longer exist. Despite having no documentation to support him, Bragalia concluded that the unit discovered that some UFOs were "interplanetary". Bragalia seems to make much of the news that the records were apparently destroyed but I don't consider it anything significant. Various records get destroyed all the time simply because they are no longer required to be retained. There seemed to be no reason for anybody to retain the unit's documentation so making a big deal out of it is not correct unless one can show they were not supposed to be destroyed. Bragalia also implicates General MacArthur being involved and having UFO sightings. I would think the Korean war and being heavily involved with the rebuilding of Japan would pretty much occupy the general's time between 1945 and 1951. After that he was not in a position to be involved in anything. One would also think there would be detailed records about his involvement in such an organization. Historians and biographers must have missed the link that Bragalia has "discovered". The end result of all this speculation is more promises of great revelations to come. As the late Phil Klass was fond of writing, "lots of luck".

Finally, Reverend Bragalia has suggested that the Bible says ET's are real. Is Bragalia actually considering the Bible an accurate historical document? What next... creationism?

Dr. David Clarke commented on the recent Hastings press conference. I don't think he was very impressed with the presentation. His comment, "*If the evidence for aliens interfering with nuclear weapons is so good – then why does Robert Hastings pick such poor examples to prove his case? The bottom line is that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. In both the Malmstrom and RAF Woodbridge cases there is absolutely no evidence*" will surely draw the ire of the UFOlogical elite everywhere. His mention of a study called, "UAPs in the UK air defense region" is important. It seemed to indicate that there is no evidence that UFOs have any interest in strategic assets and the only reason that there may be reports from these locations is because they are manned by observers 24 hours a day.

Paul Shroeder submitted an open letter to cynics and debunkers on the UFO digest blog. It sounded like the same old broken record where debunkers and skeptics were criticized for daring to ask questions. The funniest thing I saw was how he told everyone how to call ET to your location. Just go outside in your yard/parking lot/whatever and the point a flashlight skyward. The blink the light on and off ten times, then nine, then eight until you reach one. After that work you way back up to ten flashes in reverse order. Keep doing this several times each night until the aliens come. If the aliens don't come, you probably just did not believe enough. Does this work for Santa Claus too?

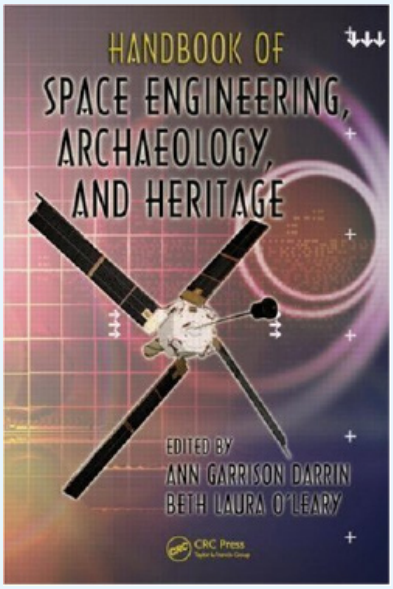
Kevin Randle pointed out that Kal Korff has claimed to have been on military maneuvers but was actually out playing paint ball. Back in SUNlite 1-3, I asked "what ever happened to Kal Korff" and felt that his videos were ridiculous. Korff really needs to do some serious self-reflection. He is beginning to sound like Frank Kaufmann, Glenn Dennis, etc..

Andrew Wozny, Canada's UFO examiner, posted a claim that states three large objects are approaching the earth and will arrive in mid-December 2012. His source is SETI astrophysicist Craig Kasnov. However, a search of the SETI web site produced no Craig Kasnov. However, there is a Craig Kasnoff, who was involved in creating seti@home. He denies being involved in this in the comments section of this blog. I find it amazing that these large objects are approaching the earth and still are two years away. How big are they and how fast are they approaching? This all sounds like Wozny is trying to cash in on the December 2012 nonsense.

Keith Basterfield wrote an excellent article about solving the Woomera UFO story. This was linked to the Solway firth spaceman photograph. He determined there is no link and the "UFO" was just an internal lens reflection. Mr. Basterfield's article is excellent work.

California is always a wonderful place to see UFOs. The video at the link of the object ejecting material looks fake to me. Another UFO video at the link was recorded by many observers. On December 1st and 8th, there were many videos of UFOs taken from the Los Angeles area. One of the persons who recorded the UFOs referred to them as "the silver surfer". It did not take long for the UFOs to be identified. It may have been solved sooner if people looked at October's UFO sighting that was caused by the Golden Knights. The Red Bull air force did some evening parachuting over Santa Monica at the same time the videos were recorded on the dates in question. The Contrail science blog analyzed the videos and demonstrated that the data agreed with Red Bull Air Force explanation. Like the Golden Knights in October, flares were attached to their legs and these produced the light show. It is a shame that Bill Nye jumped to the conclusions that the video was a hoax but I am sure he is more than willing to alter his conclusion with this data. Compare this to Jim Deardorff's unshakable belief that it could not be parachutists. This reinforces my opinion that the more publicity a UFO event receives, the less likely some UFOlogists will be to accept any explanation.

The Roswell Corner



Roswell fool's gold

Dr. Bill Doleman published his research on the Roswell dig site recently in The Handbook of Space Engineering, Archeology and Heritage edited by Ann Garrison Darrin and Beth Laura O'Leary. He wrote a chapter in the book titled, "Archaeology of the Putative Roswell UFO crash site: A case study." Most of what I read was a rehash of what was already known from "The Roswell dig diaries" and other sources. The bottom line is that nothing important was found. Dr. Doleman seems to have the opinion that they were not digging in the right place. That is most interesting because this is the place that the HIGHLY RELIABLE Roswell witness Bill Brazel told them was the location of the crash site. Remember he stated it took the ground years to heal back up (even though there is not one single photograph of the impact scar that existed for so long). With such an obvious mark, there should be no mistake as to the location of the site. Maybe Brazel was mistaken or maybe he sort of embellished things a bit. In either case, it demonstrates that, once again, one has to take many of these Roswell UFO crash stories with a grain of salt. Otherwise, you can waste a lot of time and money digging holes in the desert looking for Roswell gold but only finding garbage.

Author says 'Roswell Incident' finds readers around the world

Lost memories of the most memorable event in human history

I was recently going over some newspaper articles in the Roswell daily record of 1981 and found a story with the title of "Author says 'Roswell Incident' finds readers around the world" (RDR January 2, 1981 page 6). The author, Lynne Vanns, wrote,

> *As fate would have it, Haut had a friend in the Eighth Air Force whose job was traveling around the country collecting stories and photos of UFOs.*
> *Just before the crashed weather balloon affair, "He had been showing us the pictures." The friend told Haut that, as of that time, none of the stories or pictures he'd collected had even a suspicion of being the real thing.*
> *"So I didn't think much of it and the whole thing died on the base." In fact, Haut said he'd forgotten the whole affair until Charles Berlitz contacted him.*

The funny thing about all of this is that in 1981, Haut seems to have forgotten about the greatest event in human history as if nothing of significance had occurred. However, twenty years later, he stated in an affidavit he knew many things about the event including seeing the alien spaceship and bodies. He was suddenly full of details and particulars that supported the crashed spaceship scenario.

The use of the "security oath" excuse seems a bit tired at this point. Nothing stopped Jesse Marcel Sr. from telling his story about what happened so Haut could easily have told the details about this the instant he was interviewed. In over thirty years, not one person out of the dozens who have come forward has been prosecuted in anyway for violating any potential "security oath" associated with the Roswell "incident"!

"A cluster of balloons"

Probably the biggest event on Kevin Randle's blog had nothing to do with his articles but an on-going tit-for-tat battle that involved Gilles Fernandez, Christopher Allen, "Sourcerer", and David Rudiak among others. Hundreds of comments were made on two blog entries going over the same old tired ground concerning project MOGUL. Nothing, as usual, was resolved. Nobody can prove conclusively that the flight launched on June 4th did or did not have radar reflectors and could or could not reach the Foster Ranch. Probably the biggest evidence to suggest a cluster of balloons and radar reflector were the source of the debris are the statements by those in 1947, who are known to have recovered it. Both Marcel and Brazel in 1947 made comments that were consistent with materials used by the NYU team in constructing their balloon flights. The photographs of the debris is also consistent with these same materials. Of course, this information does not conclusively prove that what Brazel found was a flight launched by the NYU team but it does increase that possibility. The only way for crashed spaceship proponents to explain these statements is to create a vast complicated conspiracy that forced these men to lie to the media. This logic has been used since the late 1970s and has yet to sway anybody outside the UFO community. Crashed UFO proponents will have to do better if they want to convince those to cross over from the other side. Meanwhile, skeptics, debunkers, and pelicanists (or whatever UFOlogical epithet you want to use) are more than willing to accept the more likely possibility that a large quantity of balloons and radar reflectors (no matter what the source) were found on the Foster Ranch that crazy summer of 1947.

The Malmstrom merry-go-round

Last issue I mentioned the exchange of broadsides in the Malmstrom missile shutdown case. Robert Hastings is still threatening James Carlson with a lawsuit. Meanwhile, others have weighed in on the matter.

Scientific recognition

The UFO Chronicles blog posted an article where four "scientists" stated that UFOs challenged "scientific dogma". This seemed to be an effort to give scientific credibility to the press conference. However, all of these scientists had affiliations with UFOlogy or some pseudoscientific research. Let me know when scientists outside the UFO field start giving credence to this research.

Carlson responds

On November 10th, Reality Uncovered posted an open letter by James Carlson to Robert Hastings. If you recall from last issue, I suggested that Hastings' request was nothing more than placing a "bounty" on Carlson's head. Carlson simply fired back at Hastings challenging him to admit certain items he has left out in his discussions about the Malmstrom missile base shutdown. Among those items was Carlson asked Hastings to acknowledge that Figel had contacted him and stated the things that were published in the Reality Uncovered blog (and in SUNlite). Carlson also asked if Hastings had ever contacted Dick Evans as Figel requested. Evans was the commander of the missile squadron, which involved Oscar flight.

Hastings had also proclaimed that Carlson was not telling people the truth when he stated he talked to Figel. Carlson wanted Hastings to withdraw that claim. Carlson seemed more than willing to take this to court with Mr. Hastings. If it went to court, would we see Salas, Hastings, Figel, and others making actual witness statements that could make them guilty of perjury if they lied?

All of these items were pretty much yes or no answers for Hastings to respond to and he had one of three choices:

1. To ignore the letter/not respond directly to his questions.

2. To acknowledge these events were true. This would mean that he would have to publicly admit that he was guilty of lies through omission.

3. To state these events were not true. In this case, he would open himself to being exposed as a liar, which is what Carlson has stated all along.

As of this writing, Hastings has failed to respond, which means he seems to have chosen option number one.

Academia endorses UFOs?

In an apparent effort to obtain some sort of recognition by the academic community, Hastings reported that he was to speak at Oxford University on the 24th of November. While the announcement mentioned "standing room only", it really was in reference to those with press credentials. The hall had a capacity of 200 but only 20 tickets had been sold by mid-November. The price was only 5 pounds (about $8 US) but even at that price, he had difficulty filling the hall. I was informed that the actual attendance was 63. I hope that during the Q&A section, they managed to ask some more challenging/serious questions than some of those I saw being made at the press conference.

While it was reported as being at Oxford University, the venue was actually St. Hilda's College. They had rented the hall to Hastings and it was not an invitation by the College for him to speak. This makes it a financial transaction and not an endorsement of Hastings' research. Based on the tepid response, it seems that the public/students/faculty in the area felt Hastings had little to offer.

More opinions

David Clarke added an entry on his blog about the "UFOs and Nukes" press conference. While he spent a good deal of time discussing the Rendlesham case, he did mention the Malmstrom missile shutdown. His conclusion was that the case was so full of contradictions that it can only be listed as "not proven". The facts do not support UFOs shutting down Echo flight and there is no documentation that supports the claims of Salas that a shutdown also occurred at Oscar flight.

Meanwhile, Tim Hebert created a blog with the title, "Did it really happen?" and started off with the Malmstrom story. Hebert is a former SAC missile crew commander, which makes him familiar with the environment in which these events occurred. Hebert pretty much mirrored the conclusions of Carlson. To his credit, Frank Warren allowed his blog entry to be placed on his web site. However, Frank made a comment that Hebert had some "factual errors". When I asked Tim what "facts" he got wrong, he stated Warren had yet to discuss it with him. Apparently, Warren needed to look things up so they may not be any errors at all and Warren may be the one who is mistaken.

Mr. Hastings goes to Wyoming

While all this was transpiring, Hastings went to Wyoming to "investigate" UFO reports that could be associated with the missile shutdown last October (see the last issue of SUNlite). By posting requests in the newspaper, I am sure he will discover some unsubstantiated sightings that he can claim influenced the missile shutdown. It is nothing more than stirring up rumors, calling these witnesses and their reports "credible", and then adding another chapter to his "UFOs and Nukes" book. It is speculation being presented as fact.

End Game?

Will there be a court case with a potential resolution or will this exchange continue endlessly? No matter what facts are revealed that demonstrate no UFOs were involved, UFO proponents like Hastings will continue to promote these cases as something involving forces beyond this earth. Skeptics just ask for something verifiable to alter their opinion. So far, the only thing verified is that Echo had a missile shutdown. The rest of the UFO interpretation is just wild speculation based primarily on the suspect testimony by one individual, who originally could not even remember where he was or who was with him.

Stomping around, goofing off

Why the US Air Force and the British MoD kept quiet about the Rendlesham Forest Incident

by Peter Brookesmith

To the devoted connoisseur of skeptic-versus-believer debates, the argument over the 'Rendlesham Incident' of December 1980 has become a classic of its kind. The case was early dubbed 'Britain's Roswell'—an appropriate soubriquet, for claims and counter-claims about both cases have unfolded along strikingly similar lines over the years. Believers and star witnesses have elaborated the story, some in fantastical ways, while intrepid truth-seekers with nothing to gain—decried in the trade as fact-shy debunkers and government shills—keep digging up bits of evidence that indicate nothing anomalous happened.

One phase of this decades-long debate revolved around the suggestion—and it was only a suggestion, not a 'claim'—by the former USAF law enforcement officer, retired Senior Master Sergeant Kevin Conde: that a prank he played while on patrol at Woodbridge may have been behind one feature of the case.

Briefly stated, Conde—then a Technical Sergeant—on one occasion adapted a USAF police car's fancy lighting system to generate a brilliant display of coloured illuminations in a foggy night sky. This could have created the impression that mysterious beams of light were being shone not up from, but down onto, the Woodbridge base from above. Conde was not sure, but thought it possible that he had perpetrated his jape at the time Lt Col Charles Halt and his party were stumbling around in the dark in Rendlesham Forest. If so, these exchanges, on the tape-recorded commentary that Halt made at the time, make sense:

> LT COL HALT: Now we're observing what appears to be a beam coming down to the ground.
>
> M/SGT BALL: Look at the colours... shit.
>
> LT COL HALT: This is unreal.
>
> [Break in recording]

> LT COL HALT: 3.30: and the objects are still in the sky, although the one to the south looks like it's losing a little bit of altitude. We're turning around and heading back toward the base. The object to the sou... the object to the south is still beaming down lights to the ground.
>
> [Break in recording]
>
> LT COL HALT: 0400 hours: one object still hovering over the Woodbridge base at about five to ten degrees off the horizon. Still moving erratic and similar lights beaming down as earlier. [1]

Interestingly enough, two other witnesses—local residents—had said they saw coloured lights moving around in the region of the East Gate at the same time.[2] So Conde's practical joke, or one like it, looked for a while as if it might be a good explanation for that otherwise puzzling aspect of the case. On the other hand, Ian Ridpath's analysis of which stars were scintillating, and subject to autokinesis, near the horizon on the night Halt was in the woods, could equally well explain the remarks about 'light beams' on Halt's tape.[3] And as Kevin Conde can't be certain when he played his prank, and no testimony has so far emerged to pin something similar on someone else on the Night In Question, Ridpath's explanation becomes the most parsimonious.

I mention all this simply to give Kevin Conde his due *locus standi* in the Rendlesham affair. Inevitably, if now perhaps to his chagrin, Conde was drawn into what one can only call an argy-bargy on the Internet with the late Georgina Bruni, author of the True Believer's Bible on the Rendlesham incident, You Can't Tell The People[4], over his possible part in the events of the second night. Equally inevitably the question of a 'cover-up' arose in the course of the exchange. In responding to that idea, Conde wrote:

> *Knowing the USAF as I do I am still convinced that if the USAF was covering anything up, it was a vice base commander leading a search for UFOs off base [emphasis added] accompanied by people responsible for guarding nuclear weapons. The fact that senior leadership did nothing to Halt can be attributed to their desire to keep the situation low key. Relieving Halt would have made a splash, especially if he threw a public fit, coupled with a lack of firm evidence. They may have believed he was a wacko, but could not prove it.*[5]

Conde's hint that Halt was out of order in rambling about off base was echoed by Col Sam Morgan, who in the summer of 1981 succeeded Col Ted Conrad as Lt Col Halt's immediate commanding officer. In a 1984 phone conversation with famously horned, hoofed, and tailed commentator on ufology, Phil Klass, Col Morgan said: "*Halt really had no authority out there in that forest anyhow. So he was a kind of hobbyist on his own lurking around. When I... looked into it I concluded that it was just a bunch of guys screwing around in the woods.*" [6] This last phrase in turn is strangely redolent of Kevin Conde's fellow 81st SPS security policeman Chris Armold's words, in a message to the e-zine UK UFO Network. [7] Apart from some exceedingly dry remarks about the event (such as it was—*"It just was not an issue,"* said Armold) and some of its latter-day stars, Armold describes the venture into the woods as *"just a half-dozen or so of us stomping around goofing off."*

The official position

In April 1998, I became intrigued by this question of US airmen wandering around, apparently on duty, en masse, in the Suffolk woods. It struck me as strange that they should feel free to do so. I lifted my electric telephone, and spoke at length with the RAF and British Army press officers at the Ministry of Defence. I didn't mention the Rendlesham case. I merely asked, à propos any RAF base leased to the USAF, where the USAF's territorial responsibility ended and who would defend the perimeter if it were at-

tacked.

The answers were interesting, for they suggested that Lt Col Halt had put himself in a potentially embarrassing position. They were:

- USAF responsibility starts (and ends) with the fenceline of an RAF base leased to the USAF.
- Beyond that, i.e. outside the base, responsibility for security rests with the local police.

That's the strict legal position: Mr Plod is in charge. If hordes of Red Army Spetsnaz [8] troops were to have parachuted into the Suffolk countryside as Soviet ICBMs rained down on Birmingham, Knotty Ash, Stow-in-the-Wold, &c, the protocol, at face value, would have been as follows. The US base commander complains to the RAF base commander, who passes on American expressions of distaste to the local police who, duly incensed at the Soviets' offence of armed trespass, request (in suitably clipped tones) the Army to give military aid to the civil community. Note that formula: the strict legal and constitutional position is that the British military would come to the assistance of the police and thus to the defence of the British sovereign, her subjects, and her realm—not to the aid of the US military.

This protocol may seem quaint and curious, even Byzantine, to those unaware of the delicate constitutional position of the British Army. This is commanded by the sovereign but exists only by consent of parliament, which may decline to raise taxes to support it. The arrangement has its roots in the causes of the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution of the 17th century, and revolves around the British distaste for standing armies, which historically have been seen as potential instruments of regal tyranny. A similar suspicion of standing armies is built in to the US Constitution, which insists that funding for the military must be reviewed every two years. But, as will become clear, the British position is important to the 'Rendlesham Incident' and the nature of any cover-up by the authorities.

As part of a series of safeguards against the politicization of the Army on the one hand and the abuse of power by the Crown on the other, the separation of military and police powers is taken rather seriously by the British. Given Lt Col Halt's position and responsibilities,[9] it would be surprising (or at least depressing) if he hadn't been apprised of the subtleties of the British constitution and where he stood in relation to it.

Wars and rumours of wars

It's not hard to see that the intricacies of the British constitution could create problems, unforeseen in the 17th century, for those wanting to defend a USAF base in the UK against a common enemy. But in the interests of pragmatism much may be done by way of laws, leases and treaties when a country enjoys (and sometimes suffers from) an unwritten constitution. Even the egregious Nick Pope, devotee of an ET interpretation of the Rendlesham incident and of whom more later, recognizes as much:

> *The legal position with regard to United States Visiting Forces (USVF) is complex, and there are a number of different laws and treaties governing what USVF personnel can and cannot do in the UK. The general rule is that US jurisdiction ends at the perimeter fence, though there are a number of circumstances where it would be quite proper for on-duty USVF personnel to go off-base.*[10]

One such circumstance is certainly the defence of the base. USAF security police are also trained as infantrymen, fulfilling the same role as the RAF Regiment does on a British air base. As Kevin Conde explained it:

> *In the event of real tensions, and the belief that the Russians were coming, we would ... have operated freely off base. The exercises that have figured into some of this controversy are an example. The majority of the hard core 'combat' occurred off base.*
>
> *When in the air base ground defense mode we knew that if we waited until we had Russians in the wire we were already too late. It was our mission to go off base and engage them as far from the flight line as possible.*[11]

In the prelude to what turns out to be a shooting war, the preliminary stages from political crisis to outbreak of hostilities generally take a long time. By the mid Sixties it had been calculated that there were some 40–50 discrete stages an international crisis would pass through before an exchange of nuclear missiles became inevitable.[12] During that time US bases in the UK would have ample opportunity to prepare their defences.

One can safely say that any necessary diplomatic niceties would, in one form or another, have been observed long before any actual shooting started. One can say this particularly safely because in October 2010 the aforementioned Nick Pope, former Ministry of Defence (MoD) clerk and would-be half-colonel of the British Army, stated at the Fortean Times UnConvention that US forces in the UK had standing authorization under the Status of Forces Agreement to venture off-base if the security of a base was compromised. As the person who provoked this useful revelation, I regret not having had the wit to point out at the time that proceeding mob-handed off-base to debunk (Lt Col Halt's own word) a UFO or two, scarcely constitutes defending 'the security of the base' as that term might commonly be understood.

Such US exercises as occurred off-base, not being a reaction to a threat, would also have been cleared with everyone concerned in the proper order, including the British police. Constitutionally, 'clearance' would, after all, take no more than a telephone conversation between the base commander (an RAF officer) and the local chief constable to become legal—the latter is sufficiently autonomous—and thereafter it's up to him whom else, including no one, he might choose to tell about it.

Out of his own mouth

One circumstance in which it is legal and most definitely moral for US forces to move beyond base perimeters in formation is to deal with downed aircraft. But on the second night of the Rendlesham saga, the night Hall went snooping in the woods, there was no such triggering misapprehension about downed planes to inspire (or justify) an off-base expedition. [13] According to Halt himself,

> *The duty Flight Lieutenant [Bruce En-*

glund] came in, and he was quite shaken, and insisted upon speaking to myself and the base commander about a matter of utmost urgency. He said, "It's back," and I said, "What's back?" and he said, "The UFO is back." I assembled a small team of experts and we set off in the forest, ready to debunk it.[14]

Two points emerge from this revelation. In the first place, it suggests a high degree of psychological priming among the airmen involved in favour of some anomalous occurrence, deriving (one presumes) from reports or rumours of the events of the previous evening. In fairness, Englund may have been using the term 'UFO' in the strict technical sense it's employed by aviators and air traffic controllers. But Halt's retrospective claim that he 'set off in the forest, ready to debunk' the UFO suggests that he, at least, didn't take the term in that sense.

Second, Halt's formulation here fits the traditional template of believers' rhetoric—the claim to have started as a skeptic but to have been slowly converted to a belief in a favourite anomalous or paranormal phenomenon by the overwhelming nature of the evidence, etc. The intention, conscious or otherwise, of this ploy is to endow both the evidence and the adherent with authority; but implicitly, it depends on the fragile notion that personal 'authenticity' and experience outweigh the forces of logic and rational examination.

What happened next

In the original version of this article, I remarked at this point as follows: at the very least Halt should have known enough to be aware of the possible consequences of going for a mass hike off-base, on duty and in uniform. Then-Sqn Ldr (later Wing Cdr) Don Moreland, the British base commander, should have known that better than anyone. US forces overseas are subject to local law for crimes committed on the host's territory and, legally speaking, Halt and his men were trespassing. Even under the law of trespass as it stood at the time, had they caused significant damage in the forest, they would have been committing an offence, albeit minor, and could have been prosecuted. For diplomatic reasons it's perhaps unlikely they would have been hauled up before the local beak, but it's not impossible.

Having discussed this with various parties, I'm less convinced today that the situation was quite so clear-cut. For example, the question of whether Charles Halt and all his cohorts were in fact 'on duty' (or regarded themselves as such) has never been fully answered.[15] Even so, Halt himself had changed into a 'utility' uniform, and sallied forth to scratch among the trees with issue kit (a starlight scope and a Geiger counter, at the very least: the presence of light-alls is disputed) and certainly filed an official report. Lt Bruce Englund was certainly on duty. Chris Armold, by his own account, seems also to have been on duty. Sgt Monroe 'Greg' Nevilles, who operated the Geiger counter (and according to Col Sam Morgan had had little training on the machine and was none too bright), was also on duty: Halt recruited him as he was the on-call member of the base's Disaster Preparedness Unit. The status of Sgts Adrian Bustinza and Bobby Ball isn't clear. Larry Warren and John Burroughs seem just to have tagged along. In any case it seems hardly likely that any of these people would disobey Halt, whom they would regard as in charge by virtue of his rank. All of which makes Halt's position à propos the standing arrangements between the UK Government and the USAF ambiguous at best.

In turn this has some bearing on how Halt's commanders decided to respond to his adventure and his report. That would also depend to some extent on how they viewed Halt as an individual, an officer, and a gentleman. Halt was in the same position anyone might be in any large corporate enterprise: how his peers and superiors reacted to his behaviour would depend largely on their wisdom and urbanity, and their view of his character. Halt was fortunate in having his expedition viewed kindly by men of experience and insight. One says 'fortunate' because neither the officers nor the enlisted men around him seem to have formed an especially high opinion of Lt Col Charles Ignis Halt.

Col Sam Morgan called him *"a kind of twit"* in his 1984 conversation with Phil Klass. In an email exchange with me in December 2010 he called Halt's foray "flaky", and added: *"Halt was a bit like the boy scout who never grew up and was out looking for some kind of attention or excitement."* Halt's now-famous habit of riding around at night with security police patrols would certainly suggest a certain Walter Mitty-ish tendency. Regarding this, Col Morgan commented: "*I was concerned that he would usurp Major [Mal] Zickler's authority and often spoke with Major Zickler to ensure he was not irritated by Halt's actions. As long as Maj. Zickler could tolerate Halt's meddling and as long as Halt did not compromise his job performance, I did not interfere.*"

The enlisted men who chauffeured Halt around were not always so sanguine, while independently endorsing Col Morgan's perception that Halt was in search of attention and excitement. Kevin Conde observed:

Senior officers generally stayed out of our business, as they did not want to interfere or become part of something they [might] have to rule on later. Halt rode all the time—says something about his life or lack of. ... Folks that ride with cops want the excitement, and when they see something dramatic it is exciting. In the end though it is also frustrating, because they aren't cops and they can't share in the excitement. All they can do is just watch. That's Halt—he watched, but could not participate, and he hated that. Until Christmas 80-81. Then he had the chance to be a man of action. [16]

And Col Morgan's take today on Halt's story is this:

Halt was meddling as usual and went to check things out. Halt was over reacting when on the scene and it was recorded on a pocket tape recorder. I got this tape and... [it] started a story which, for Halt, shined a light on him. He could have addressed the facts or he could have inflated the story. He chose to inflate the story. Soon the story was much bigger than he expected and he does not now have a graceful way out.

Red peril, red faces

Halt's superiors' response to news of his sortie should also be seen in the general political context of the time, and against the backdrop of the presence of

nuclear weapons at the Woodbridge/Bentwaters complex.

At the end of 1980, there were US hostages still held in Iran (on 21 December, the recently self-installed ayatollahs had demanded $10 billion for their release), and the Iran–Iraq war was in its opening stages; there was an IRA mainland bombing campaign in progress; the USAF base at Greenham Common was infested with ladies protesting against stationing US cruise missiles in the UK, while there had recently been a rise in militant anti-nuclear protest in general (for instance, the Sharpness incident of 8 July). The Soviets had renewed jamming of Western radio broadcasts to the USSR; Poland was in upheaval, threatening the integrity of the Soviet empire, and there was a real possibility of invasion by the Red Army; the Gang of Four was on trial in China; and Ronald Reagan, whose rhetoric promised an end to détente with the Communist bloc, had just been elected President of the United States.

In short, these were fairly jumpy times by Cold War standards. In their light, there was potentially a huge embarrassment for the USAF and for the US itself in the discovery that a bunch of American airmen from Woodbridge and Bentwaters had been distracted from what they were supposed to do—guard their base: the heart of the USAF police task was to guard the weapons systems and storage areas—and go for a ramble in the forest in search of a 'UFO'. In a review in Magonia (No 74, April 2001) of Georgina Bruni's You Can't Tell The People, Peter Rogerson, admittedly with some exaggeration, put it this way:

> *...if you were the USAF or the British or American governments and you were pushed to into an absolute corner, which story would cause you the most embarrassment in the tabloids: "Drug crazed American servicemen fired on a lighthouse thinking it was an ALIEN SPACESHIP (shock horror), and these are the men guarding the CRUISE MISSILES" (even more shock horror); or, "Brave lightly armed US servicemen confront an ALIEN SPACESHIP, risking all to do their sacred duty and protect their precious charge". No real contest is it? True or not, the first headline invites in all sorts of real investigative journalists, sniffing out tales of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, and a state of affairs too close to Bilko for comfort. The second invites cranks and makes sure that real journalists stay far away.*

We know what Halt's superiors did in these circumstances, which was send a bland report by Halt up the line via Sqn Ldr Moreland to the MoD. They, having made some enquiries that established that nothing was seen on radar, came to their usual conclusion—"no defence significance"—and directed their attention and their long-suffering quills elsewhere. But Rogerson (as I did until quite recently) clearly thought, in 2001, that there had been a conscious, calculated decision by those on the ground at Woodbridge not to make much of Halt's expedition. For the record, I've never assumed, as Rogerson seems to here, that the USAF or the MoD has throughout deliberately deflected attention from some Greater Secret hidden in the Rendlesham incident.

But from what I can gather, it seems not to have crossed anyone's mind that Halt had, in the vulgar phrase, driven a coach and horses through the Status of Forces agreement. Whether this was inattention to fine detail or a case of turning a blind eye is, at the time of writing, anyone's guess. The fact of Halt's transgression may, of course, have crossed Don Moreland's mind, but he hasn't said so on the record. Halt seems not to have had an earwiggin' over his foray. Col Sam Morgan told me: *"I don't know of any wire brushing that Halt received here over his actions, nor did I find anyone concerned about the matter. It was dismissed as little more than Halt being Halt."* The urbane and tolerant view prevailed. Rather more likely is that the wider implications occurred to the civil servants in the MoD, and perhaps to others such as Gen. Charles Gabriel, to whose notice the incident came. But however one looks at it, it wasn't in anyone's interests to make an uproar, since that would, inevitably, have become public.

And finally

None of the above bears on what 'really' happened in the forest. But it does reasonably, Occam-like even, explain why for years both the UK MoD and the US DoD were really not that keen to let much on about what no one now disputes happened—that a bevy of US airmen, at the behest of a Deputy Combat Support Group Commander who should have known better, went blundering about where they should not have been. (No wonder the forest wildlife was in uproar.) It should be no great surprise that—in the interests of good relations, and most particularly good public relations, between long-standing allies—there was a policy of discretion; or cover-up, if you insist. But it was only a cover-up of sorts. For there is a fairly large distinction between studiously ignoring a potentially profoundly embarrassing infraction of English law because of what it revealed about the calibre of certain senior USAF personnel, and conspiring to remain silent about the arrival of an extra-terrestrial craft. Or perhaps time-travellers, as we are now invited to believe.

In sum: Lt Col Charles Halt should have known the law, the British constitution and the conventions before initiating his foolhardy expedition. If he did not, he was out of order; and if he did know, he was even more out of order. The USAF may be forgiven for wishing to draw a discreet veil over what may have been ignorance or foolishness on the part of a senior officer at a strategic air base. Unfortunately, as with many another attempt to conceal a cock-up, this one backfired massively—and the smoke is with us still, for an unnerving number of people seem to prefer breathing its enchanting fumes over the refreshing ozone of rational thought. Fortunately for Halt, however, he was commanded by officers who were more of the civilised and forgiving variety than they were a species of unrelenting martinet.

Ironically, if anyone is now touting a tale of sinister, premeditated cover-up, it is Col Charles Halt himself and his cronies. The final word on that should go to Col Sam Morgan:

> *Over the years Halt has expanded his story to the point of hinting at a cover up by the USA and UK authorities and I would certainly criticize him here. I have never believed that a national government would be capable of such a cover up, as there would just be too many people involved. If nothing else, I believe Halt has insulted both our governments with his accusations.*

NOTES & REFERENCES

1. A transcript of the 'Halt tape' can be found at URL: www.ianridpath.com/ufo/halttape.htm, and an MP3 audio file can be downloaded from www.ianridpath.com/ufo/halttape.mp3

2. Thanks to James Easton for pointing out this connection, by way of Jenny Randles: UFO Crash Landing?, in a post of 1 September 2003 to the UFORL e-mail list: In UFO Crash Landing?, Jenny Randles documents a witness, Sarah Richardson (only 12 at the time), who reportedly watched enigmatic 'light beams', when Halt was making a similar observation. ... At the time, she was at her mother's home in Woodbridge. It was between 1 and 3 am into Sunday, 28 December.*"From (Mum's) house you could see the river and the forests and the bases. You could hear the revving of the engines. You became familiar with all the spotlights and other activity. This night was different. Three bands of light appeared over the woods to the side of the runway ... They were star-like and they were bright, coloured red, blue and yellow ... the oddest thing was the colour changes. Blue, green, yellow and so on."*Jenny also notes that on the same night, local garage owner, Gerry Harris, claimed to have observed near [the] East Gate and apparently emanating from within the forest, *"three separate lights"* which sometimes *"moved around in circles"*.

3. See the analysis at www.ianridpath.com/ufo/rendlesham3.htm

4. Georgina Bruni: You Can't Tell The People: The Definitive Account of the Rendlesham Forest UFO Mystery, Sidgwick & Jackson 2000

5. Kevin Conde, e-mail message to Georgina Bruni dated 17 July 2003, quoted in a post to the UFORL e-mail list of 20 July 2003. This list is now defunct, but some posts may still be retrievable through the Wayback Machine, http://web.archive.org/collections/web.html

6. Klass's typed notes of his conversation can be found as a PDF at http://www.ianridpath.com/ufo/morgan.pdf

7. UK UFO Network, #80 Pt II, 5 Sept 1997. Archived at http://ufoupdateslist.com/1997/sep/m07-029.shtml

8. 'Spetsnaz' is an abbreviation of Spetsialnoye Nazranie—'troops of special purpose'. 'Although Spetsnaz units may be used for other purposes during peacetime, their primary role is to carry out strategic missions during the final days prior to war breaking out and in war itself. These wartime tasks would include: deep reconnaissance of strategic targets; the destruction of strategically important command-control-and-communications (C3) facilities; the destruction of strategic weapons' delivery systems; demolition of important bridges and and transportation routes; and the snatching or assassination of important military and political leaders. Many of these missions would be carried out before the enemy could react and some even before war had actually broken out.' —John Keller, 'Spetsnaz', http://www.systemauk.com/spetsnaz.htm

9. Lt Col Halt's official title was Deputy Combat Support Group Commander, a post most often referred to as 'deputy base commander'. The Combat Support Commander was ultimately responsible for all roads and grounds, all buildings and structures, security, law enforcement, the schools, the Commissary, the Base Exchange (BX), behaviour of dependents, utilities such as water and sewerage, and many other such activities. It was the security and policing aspect of his job that gave Halt the licence to ride with the base law enforcement patrols and, of course, to call on security troops to join him on the night he went outside the wire and into Rendlesham Forest.

10. Post to UFORL e-mail list, 21 July 2003

11. Post to UFO Updates, 'Re: More Bentwaters Information', 30 Aug 2003.

12. I had this piece of information from Lord Birdwood, whose office was next to mine at the J. Walter Thompson Company in London, in the mid-1960s; he in turn had it as part of a briefing (which included a screening) concerning Peter Watkins's then-banned BBC film The War Game at the House of Lords. Having since searched in vain for some more concrete reference, I am forced to appear to be name-dropping.

13. I suspect that the responsibility of USAF police for finding downed aircraft was also covered in the leases and treaties to which Pope refers, and involved some kind of standing licence to cover such emergencies. Once again it would clearly be mad to have to go through a diplomatic rigmarole before getting people to twisted metal and roasting flesh. The UK's FOIA has yet to be fully exploited in finding out just what were (and are) the arrangements, agreements, contracts or treaties by which (even allied) foreign troops could go into action on British soil?

14. Interview with Col Halt, Strange But True?, UK ITV, 9 December 1994

15. At the time I was writing the final draft of this article I had had no answer to an enquiry on this precise point, forwarded via a third party to Col Halt on 21 December 2010.

16. E-mail dated 1 October 2010, to Ian Ridpath.

THANKS most especially to Kevin Conde and Col Sam Morgan, for clarifying a number of points raised while revising this article, and to Dr David Clarke, James Easton, Joe McGonagle, Jenny Randles, Ian Ridpath and John Stepkowski for various specific illuminations, as well as for continuing discussions of the Rendlesham incident over the years, and for keeping my interest in it alive.

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This article is adapted and expanded from 'Forgive Us Our Trespasses', published in The Skeptic Volume 17 Number 2-3, Summer and Autumn 2004

Hollywood and Area 51: A missed opportunity

By Peter W. Merlin

Why can't Hollywood produce a decent documentary on Area 51? In the mid-1990s when the secret Air Force base in Nevada, became a part of popular culture, very little information was publicly available. Aviation enthusiasts had long known that Groom Lake, about 84 miles northwest of Las Vegas, had been a testing ground for the U-2, A-12 (predecessor to the SR-71), and the F-117A stealth fighter. In 1989, popular interest was sparked by claims of a man named Bob Lazar who said he had worked with reverse-engineered alien spacecraft at a secret facility south of Groom Lake. Soon, tourists from all over the world were converging on a remote stretch of desert along Nevada Highway 375 to see if they could spot any flying saucers.

As media coverage increased, various television networks produced documentaries to feed the viewing public's growing hunger for information. Unfortunately, available information was sparse but a number of researchers worked to get at the truth. Some focused their efforts on the UFO connection while others were more interested in the classified (but entirely Earthly) military testing that took place at Area 51. Some of the so-called documentaries that resulted contained little more than rampant speculation. Others featured at least some documented historical facts.

I have participated in over a dozen television programs. Those specifically related to Area 51 include ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings: Secrets of Area 51 (ABC TV, 19 April 1994), Inside Area 51 (Discovery Channel, 14 December 1997), Return to Area 51 (Discovery Channel, 5 December 2002), Mystery Hunters: Area 51/Roswell (YTV Canada/Discovery Kids, 6 January 2003), UFO Hunters: Area 51 Revealed (The History Channel, 25 February 2009), and MysteryQuest: Alien Cover-Up (The History Channel, 14 October 2009). I have also consulted on several programs where I did not appear on camera.

Hurray for Hollywood

It is a sad commentary on the situation that, more than a decade after it first aired, Inside Area 51 remains one of the best documentaries on the subject. Unfortunately, it contains a near-fatal flaw. The original production plan included a fair and balanced selection of interviews representing those who believed Area 51 to be a haven for extraterrestrials and their technology and those who considered the base simply a government test facility for advanced aircraft and weapons testing. All of this changed when the June 1997 issue of Popular Mechanics magazine hit the stands.

Science/Technology editor Jim Wilson wrote, "Area 51 has shut down." He claimed that not only had the base closed completely but that secret test operations had moved to a new facility near Green River, Utah. Wilson made these bold claims after a visit to Nevada during which he made a few wrong turns while trying to find the Groom Lake Road, and instead ended up at a seldom-used entrance to Range 61 of the Nellis Air Force Range. Without knowing the dubious circumstances of Wilson's claims, the producers of Inside Area 51 rushed to interview him for the program.

Unfortunately, all other interviews had been completed and there was no time to recall any of the experts to provide a rebuttal to the Popular Mechanics article. As a result, Wilson's unsubstantiated and easily refutable claims went unanswered. The viewing audience was left with the indelible impression that Area 51 had been abandoned. In the years since the program first aired in 1997, it has been shown countless times in repeats. Despite access to abundant evidence to the contrary – much of it available on the Internet – entire generations of viewers still believe that the Groom Lake base is closed.

My battle to introduce new material into the scripts began with Return to Area 51 in 2002. By that time, enough new information had become available to debunk some of the myths and clear up a lot of questions and misconceptions about the Groom Lake facility. Like much of the viewing audience, I was tired of seeing the same stuff rehashed over and over. I suspected that the trouble was that producers of these programs didn't have access to the new information that was available because they weren't contacting the right people. They just went back to the usual suspects time and again. I figured that my involvement in return to Area 51 would be an opportunity to correct the Jim Wilson story and reveal details of the facility's history that had never been publicized. I spent a couple hours in the studio but most of my best material never made it to the final cut. The end product was, in my opinion, disappointing.

My subsequent involvement in several other productions showed that the producers – it didn't matter which network – simply didn't want documented facts if rumors and rants brought better ratings. The Canadian crew of Mystery Hunters asked me to guide them to a U-2 crash site. Although they paid my way (hotels, food, and gas), it wasn't exactly a vacation. I had to make a six-hour drive to meet them in Alamo, Nevada, and plan for an early morning start to the two-hour journey to the crash site. When we were just a few miles short of reaching the site, the Field Producer decided they had driven far enough. They shot my interview in the middle of nowhere, next to a road, and pretended we had reached our destination though we had been just minutes from reaching the actual crash site. I guess authenticity isn't necessary if the audience doesn't know any better.

My experience with UFO Hunters was equally frustrating. The show was billed as a forensic investigation of UFO-related phenomena with an investigative team headed by William J. Birnes, publisher of UFO Magazine. His "team of experts" included researcher and scuba diver Pat

Uskert, mechanical engineer and MIT researcher Ted Acworth, and investigative biologist Jeff Tomlinson. I was invited to participate in the final episode of Season 2: "Area 51 Revealed." A number of people advised me not to get involved with UFO Hunters, saying that it was sensationalistic and silly. I figured that it was at least an opportunity to get some facts on record to counter the myths and rumors. Even if most of the other interviewees came off as kooks, I could serve as the voice of reason.

I met the crew in Alamo and we drove over a nearby mountain range on dirt roads to Delamar Dry Lake where Acworth interviewed me as we walked across the sun-baked playa. As usual, I provided a great deal of information that had never been broadcast on any previous television program. Despite the fact that I assured the producers that they were getting an exclusive scoop, the majority of the material failed to make the final cut.

I had been asked to bring a number of items with me including aerial and satellite images of Groom Lake that showed how the base had evolved since it was built in 1955. I also brought various official government maps that showed Area 51, declassified documents, artifacts, and memorabilia from the secret base. We set up in a different desert location to shoot a "show and tell" sequence in which would explain the significance if the items to Acworth. Because according to the Field Producer, "there was not enough time," we rushed though an abbreviated version of what had been planned and most of what we accomplished never made the final cut in any case. When the show aired in February 2009, it mostly consisted of shaky footage of random desert scenery and a recap of the previous segment following every commercial break. Once again, my efforts had been wasted.

Tilting at windmills

Some people have wondered why I continue to subject myself to a humiliating battle against apparently insurmountable odds. They might be tempted to suggest that it is reminiscent of the old joke about the circus worker whose job it was to clean up elephant dung. A passerby, who saw him hip-deep in excrement, asked, "How can you put up with such demeaning conditions? Haven't you ever thought about another line of work?" To which the worker replied, "What, and give up show business?"

I've got news for you. I grew in Hollywood – the city and the industry. Show business fame means nothing to me. As an historian, however, I have a burning desire to see that fantasy is separated from fact and that people are getting the real story of Area 51 and not some ridiculous fiction.

This desire led to the MysteryQuest debacle. The show's producers lured me in with the promise that their "expedition based investigative series" would focus on the truth about Area 51 instead of the mythology. As usual, it was a lie. Bear in mind that the name of the series was MysteryQuest, not MysterySolved. Suffice it to say, the audience was once again treated to the usual hype about extraterrestrials and the standard encounters with "cammo dude" security guards, night-vision cameras trained on the sky, and a hike up Tikaboo Peak to view the base from a distance of 26 miles.

Initially, the episode was to focus solely on current and historical activities at the Groom Lake base. The cameras would follow an investigative team consisting of MUFON-Nevada director Mark Easter and myself. We were later joined by Area 51 pop culture gadfly Glenn Campbell for the inevitable Tikaboo Peak trek and Glenn took the MysteryQuest crew to Green River, Utah, to "investigate" the long debunked rumors of a "new Area 51" first espoused in the 1997 Popular Mechanics article.

I had been promised that this show would tell the real story of Area 51 and that my expertise was needed. Unfortunately, the script outline was already fixed and the Field Producer stymied me at nearly every turn. If I tried to give some facts about Area 51 that had been uncovered through my dedicated research efforts, I was told that "it would spoil the mystery."

I was repeatedly told to remember that, "Area 51 is a mystery." Well, I thought the point of the show was to solve the mystery. Apparently that was not the case. They just wanted to tease the audience. Reality was brushed aside to make room for melodrama. I played along grudgingly while trying to slip in as much truth as possible. Off camera, I complained vocally but to no avail.

I felt most sorry for Mark Easter who has expressed a laudable willingness to study the available facts before jumping to any extraordinary conclusions. The Field Producer constantly forced him to raise the ET hypothesis even though he prefers to avoid such behavior during a real investigation. He complained bitterly about having to do and say things that were clearly out of character, but he still hoped to get his message across.

Glenn Campbell chose the path of least resistance. He suggested that we just give them what they want, no matter how ridiculous. Glenn is perfectly happy just playing along and at times we managed to have some fun with it.

It was mostly kabuki theater, all highly stylized moves. The production company hired a contractor from Las Vegas to set up several night-vision cameras in the desert outside the perimeter of the Nellis Range to reveal "anything flying over Groom Lake." Unfortunately, the cameras had such wide-angle lenses that they wouldn't capture anything in detail and they fed into VHS tape decks so resolution was poor. We drove down Groom Lake Road to the warning signs at the perimeter in order to get footage of us looking at the security guards as they looked at us from opposite sides of the border. There was never any danger that we would cross any lines or have any actual problems with base security.

Fact or faked?

The worst offenses came on Day Two. The MysteryQuest producers had told me they wanted to "investigate a mystery crash site" near Area 51. I told them I didn't know of any unidentified sites but that I could take them to any of several crash sites of experimental aircraft from Area 51. They picked a crash site that was relatively close to the town of Rachel, our base of operations.

It could have been a great story without any embellishment. In 1967, a rocket-propelled Lockheed D-21B unmanned spy craft from Area 51 was accidentally

launched from a B-52 and crashed near a small rural community. According to my interviews with military and civilian witnesses, personnel from Area 51 quickly secured the crash and cleaned up every trace of wreckage. Witnesses were admonished to forget what they had seen.

During a 2005 investigation of the crash site, I had found some small pieces of debris along with one very large piece. Using declassified technical manuals, I was able to identify the material as part of the secret drone. I warned the MysteryQuest Field Producer that we might not make any new discoveries on camera and suggested I show them what I had already found and identified. She said they didn't want to do a recreation of the discovery and insisted that they would not stage a "find" but she wanted a sample to send to a lab for identification.

I had hoped that MysteryQuest would treat the D-21B crash site examination like an episode of C.S.I. – Crime Scene Investigation. Perhaps there would be a dramatic recreation of the incident, with startled ranchers seeing a mysterious black craft come streaking out of the sky. I would give some historical background on the event and explain my research methods for locating the debris field. Then I would demonstrate methods for identifying the pieces through the use of materials, construction methods, markings analysis, and comparison to photographs and official documentation.

That didn't work for MysteryQuest. They wanted an unidentified object crash and they insisted on sending a sample for scientific analysis. It didn't matter that the lab would only be able to tell them the material was manufactured on Earth. In the end, the lab technician couldn't distinguish between "part of an aircraft or a farm implement."

When we filmed the largest piece of wreckage at the site, a rocket booster nose cone, I pointed out that it was clearly identifiable through its materials and construction, Lockheed Skunk Works inspection stamps, D-21 part numbers, and recognizable components that could be checked against photos and technical manuals. The Field Producer cut the scene short and told me I couldn't say that on camera. We had to keep it a mystery so that a piece of debris could be identified in the lab. I thought that seemed ridiculous and wasteful but the producer said, "That's what the audience expects."

We re-shot the scene, pretending not to know what the part might have come from. When Mark was told to ask me if there could possibly be anything extraterrestrial about the debris, he objected because it was clearly man-made and I objected because it was easily and completely identifiable. The Field Producer promised that between the laboratory analysis of debris and an interview I was to give later (presenting my research findings), we would be able to show what it was.

She also said she did not want to "fake any discovery" of debris. After a fruitless search for new (i.e. previously undiscovered) debris, however, she decided to have Mark "discover" one of the pieces I had found in 2005 – a twisted brass fitting that looked "alien." We analyzed the item with a Geiger counter before "collecting" it. That may seem unnecessarily melodramatic but parts of the D-21B were made of magnesium-thorium alloy, a mildly radioactive metal.

Later, I was finally allowed to show some D-21 photos and documents on camera and explain how I had identified the source of the debris. This interview never made the final cut. It's too bad because the real story was far more interesting than the bogus "mystery crash" scenario they featured in the show.

On the final day, we arose well before dawn and drove to the Tikaboo Peak trailhead with our guide, Glenn Campbell. The production company had rented an enormous telephoto lens in the hope of getting detailed images of the base. Since it weighed around 250 pounds in its protective case, four local teens were hired to lug it up the mountain. It proved to be a fairly pointless exercise, however. Although we started hiking around sunrise, it took more than six hours to reach the summit, by which time the atmospheric conditions were less than ideal. Looking though the camera, I began to point out the various buildings at Area 51 and identify them. Naturally the Field Producer cut me off, "No, don't tell us that. Ask Glenn Campbell. He's supposed to be our guide." Glenn's immediate response was, "What are you asking me for? Pete's the real expert."

Missed opportunity

The MysteryQuest episode was originally to focus solely on Area 51 but halfway through the final edit, the producers decided to expand the scope to include a whole bunch of unrelated UFO material (Roswell, Nazca lines, UFO sightings by jet pilots, etc.). Now titled "Alien Cover-Up," the script quickly changed from a coherent narrative to a confusing jumble with too many subjects being thrown at the viewers with little explanation.

After the show aired in October 2009, Internet discussion forums were filled with negative feedback from viewers. Many people were dissatisfied with the slipshod production and the fact that most of the material was rehashed from every previous Area 51 program. The show provided almost no new information and perpetuated the myth that Area 51 was an officially unacknowledged facility, something I long ago disproved with extensive documentation.

One ironic incident took place while were staying in Rachel, supposedly investigating to learn the truth about Area 51. At the Little Ale'Inn, we met a man named Jim who worked at Area 51 for 14 years. The MysteryQuest crew didn't even bother interviewing him. They were more than happy, however, to interview Pat (the owner of the Inn) about her supposed UFO sighting. Like the rest of the production, it was a missed opportunity.

The Belgian UFO wave: A statistical study

by Roger Paquay PHYSICIST (Universite de LIEGE, 1964)Directeur honoraire.

Editor note - Roger sent me this article regarding the Belgian UFO wave and statistics. I had him simplify it a bit to put it on a reader friendly level. I also edited it a bit for syntax that was lost in translation. Additionally, Roger mentioned that the number of cases and reports did not agree (in some cases the number of cases is greater than the number of reports) because SOBEPS apparently had cases reported months later. All the raw data comes from SOBEPS and any flaws in that data are theirs.

This study was done with the data edited in VOB2 p361 to 377 .

I must first explain some simple statistical rules concerning the study of data. These rules permit us to understand the meaning of the numerical data, absolute or calculated. They also allow the reader to go to the conclusions if they don't want to look to the table of data.

When the values of one variable are numerous, the data will be grouped together. The interval of variation will be shared in a certain number of touching intervals called "classes".

By convention it will be situated from five to twenty. Each class should contain a minimum of ten numbers but this is not absolutely necessary. The classes ideally should also have the same amplitude if possible. Different Cartesian graphs may relate to absolute values or to frequencies and cumulative frequencies.

Definitions needed to understand the problem. :

Absolute value = value of the data.

Frequency = ratio between the data considered and the total of the data. This ratio is always from zero to one (0 to 1)

Cumulative frequencies = sum of the different frequencies when you go from one group to the following. These data permit us to draw a graph from the point zero to the total value one. The area under the graph gives the part of data for a certain period.

Correlation: link that can exist between two different species of data, here "number of lines edited in the media" and "number of UFO declarations".

Value of this coefficient between (-1) and (+1). A negative value indicates there is no link. A positive value indicates a possible link. If the coefficient is superior to (+ 0.9) it is quasi certain. A coefficient of 0.95 and more is considered as very significative of a real link.

Contrary to SOBEPS who did present data day by day for each month, I chose to present it month by month, using the seventeen months from December 1989 to April 1991

The whole press in the French area, local press, regional press or national press was discussing the UFO problem. So the whole French area was covered. This was completed by the other media, radios and TV. Each medium had its own readers, listener or audience. SOBEPS data contained data from French press and Flemish press. But there is evidence that the reports by the witnesses were influenced by other media sources as well.

SOBEPS, with the day by day data, con-

	No. cases	No. reports	No. of edited lines	Frequency of cases	Frequency of edited lines	Frequency of reports	Frequency for cumulative reports
Dec 1989	183	138	14633	.22789	.34453	.13193	.13193
Jan 1990	34	53	3812	.04234	.08975	.05066	.18259
Feb 1990	53	54	1431	.066	.033503	.051625	.23422
Mar 1992	47	109	3789	.05853	.089211	.104206	.33842
April 1990	81	184	7821	.10087	.184144	.175908	.51433
May 1990	56	95	2355	.06973	.055448	.090822	.60515
June 1990	27	35	2579	.03362	.0607022	.0334608	.63861
July 1990	38	37	1938	.04732	.04563	.0353728	.067434
Aug 1990	16	25	0	.01992	0	.0239	.69824
Sept 1990	8	16	25	.00996	.000588	.015296	.71354
Oct 1990	55	55	635	.06849	.014951	.052581	.76612
Nov 1990	44	58	2059	.05479	.0484789	.055449	.82156
Dec 1990	36	68	72	.04483	.001695	.065009	.88657
Jan 1991	41	71	140	.05105	.0032962	.067877	.95445
Feb 1991	12	22	287	.01494	.006757	.021032	.97548
Mar 1991	43	26	391	.05354	.009206	.024856	1.0003
April 1991	29	0	505	.03611	.0118901	0	1.003
	803	1046	42472	.99993	.9998002	.9999846	

cluded there was no correlation between the publications and the number of reports. *"The correlation press-testimony is totally negative"* (VOB2 page 338). This result is very curious because SOBEPS continue: *"From the last week of January to the end of the first week in February, there were very little information on UFOs in the press…. And there, the media impact was felt. This silence in the press was linked to the silence of our phone."*

SOBEPS continued to deny any link between publications and the number of cases but regularly called for witness reports in February, March and April because they were concerned that number of reports would drop off.

The data in these seventeen classes (seventeen months) were determined from the data in VOB2 pages 361 to 377 and also page 356. I totalized for each month the number of cases, the number of lines edited in the press and the number of reports. Then I calculated the relative frequencies for the different monthly data: f = monthly cases / total cases.. I then placed the data in an Excel spreadsheet and created the table on the previous page.

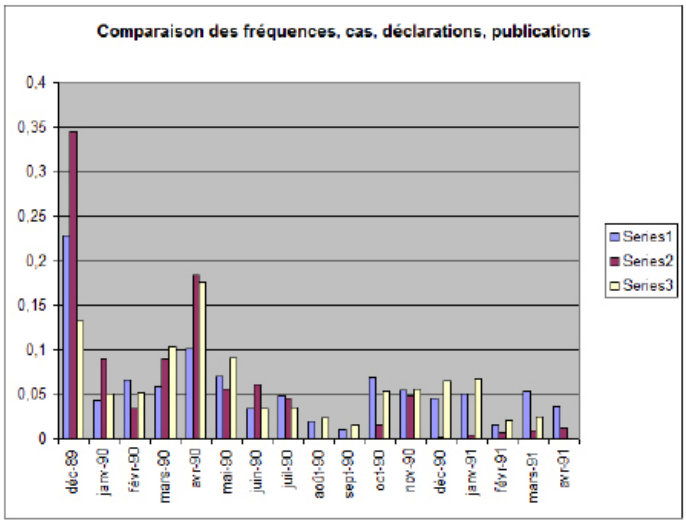
The bar chart and the graph of cumulative frequencies (id est sum of the frequencies), called "courbe integrale" in VOB2, as drawn by the Excel spreadsheet.

Frequencies are on the vertical axis and months on the horizontal axis.

If we look the bar chart we see for the 10 first months an apparent relationship between the number of cases and the number of edited lines. But this does not match for the following months.

We search then if there is a positive correlation between the frequency of the number of cases and the frequency of the number of edited lines. This calculation, done by the Excel spreadsheet, given for the period from December 1989 to April 1991, is a very significant correlative coefficient of 0.912. If you limit to the ten first months you find the value of 0.954 a more significant link between the two data.

Remark: if we do the same for the French data without the Flemish data you find for the whole period corr coeff = 0.934; for 12 months, 0.947; for the ten first months 0.964.



The graph with cumulative frequencies is very interesting and gives us other data.

Starting from point 0.5 on the vertical axis you draw a parallel to the horizontal axis. This horizontal line cut the curve in one point. By this point you draw a vertical line and you find a point just before the point April 1990. You can do the same for other percentages. All this shows us that:

50% of the reports were made in the first four months of the wave and 60% in the first six months. A further six months were needed to attain 80 %.

This shows an evident lack of interest when the media had no more interest in UFOs.

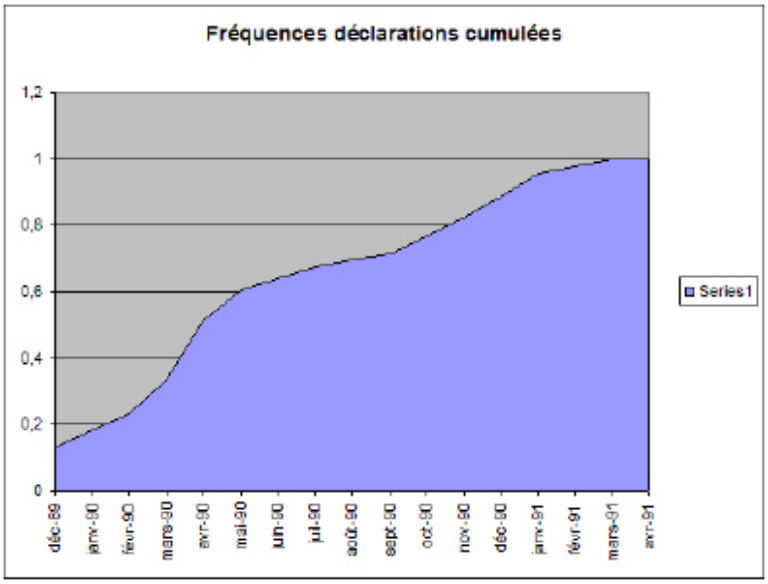
In its conclusions, VOB2 page 378, SOBEPS recognize medias have conducted to "des témoignages stimulés positifs : positive stimulated testimonies " but also to "des témoignages stimulés négatifs, negative stimulated testimonies".

This demonstrates very well an impact from the information in the media and a rumor effect.

SOBEPS continues, nevertheless, to deny a link between publications and UFO reports.

It is evidence that only one statistical analysis of the data can give conclusions that you cannot have by looking day by day.

Do not forget that this study measured only the sole impact of the written medi- but not that from TV and radio, which would influence and reinforce the written data. RTBF and RTL by their TV and radio broadcasts reached a higher number of people than the written media and many times a day. They probably generated reports like the newspapers and thus reinforced their impact. Their contribution to the data cannot be measured.



Initiative 300 takes a beating

The November 2, 2010 elections in Denver had a unique initiative on its ballot. Voters were to decide if they wanted to create an "extraterrestrial affairs commission". This "commission" would help people interact with ETs and their craft. The initiative on the ballot also mentioned it would be funded by only grants and donations.

That was pretty much all that was on the ballot that voters saw. However, behind this smoke screen was some rather blatantly ridiculous UFO beliefs in the initiative that the voters would have blindly declared as true:

1. All presidents since Franklin Roosevelt knew about alien spaceships visiting earth.

2. The US government has been suppressing evidence for aliens and their technologies.

3. Aliens and their spaceships have been visiting earth.

Additionally, not mentioned on the ballot were the details about selecting the commission. The actual commission would have been made up of 7 volunteers approved by the Mayor. Four of these had to be residents of Denver. These volunteers would have been required to have some unique qualifications.

- One had to be a physical scientist.

- One had to be a social scientist.

- A medical doctor who had published something about UFOs and ET.

- A person who had been investigating UFOs for at least five years and written a book or articles on the subject.

- A person who received a "diploma"/ certificate in Exopolitics.

- A psychologist/social scientist who had talked to at least a hundred people, who had close encounters with aliens.

My guess is that Peckman probably qualified to fill one of those positions (he probably had one of those questionable "Exopolitics" diplomas). He probably also knew three others that would have filled the four positions that were "residents of Denver". One of these was probably Niara Iseley, Denver's extraterrestrial contact examiner. She wrote a blog entry about how vital it was for the people of Denver to vote "Yes". With a chance to be on the commission, it was obviously vital to her.

In my opinion, Peckman probably knew the initiative had little chance of winning but saw that he would still gain from the publicity. He got to appear on TV and get his name published in media outlets everywhere promoting himself and the initiative. People would then go to his web site and maybe purchase some of his Metatron technology devices (which I seriously doubt even work). It seems likely that Mr. Peckman personally benefitted from the initiative's publicity.

Just prior to the election, Filer's Files (#44-2010) stated the initiative was going to pass based on two bits of information. The first was the city auditor, Dennis Gallagher, reportedly stated it was going to pass. The second was a source stating that the Latinos , who were 30% of the Denver population, would all vote for the initiative. If you believed this kind of thinking, one would think that things looked good for initiative 300. A cold dose of reality hit the initiative 300 crowd on election day.

It did not take long to realize that Jeff Peckman's "initiative 300" took a beating at the polls. Over 80% of the voters said "NO" to his ET commission. After the initiative was trounced, Peckman told Billy Cox that he blamed the democrats who told voters not to vote for any numbered initiatives, and skeptics, who said the initiative would have used taxpayer money. Of course, it did cost the taxpayer's money just to put the measure on the ballot and it would have cost money to oversee/ run such a commission. Peckman then indicated he might sue Denver's budget management director because he supposedly gave an estimate on the cost of the commission that was too high. He also indicated he would find some way to form the commission without a vote from the electorate! Peckman seems to think those who have been voted into office are going to be stupid enough to create a bogus commission the electorate (who they answer to every election) voted against! Voters and elected officials are much smarter than Peckman seems to think they are or Peckman is not as smart as he thinks he is.

I have to wonder about the individuals who voted FOR the commission. Were these voters actually knowledgeable about the initiative or did they vote for it simply because they liked how it sounded. Is this portion of the electorate composed of the same kind of individuals, who buy things like "Metatron technology", which states you will be a more coherent thinker after using it?

It was interesting to see that Peckman's blog and web site has not been updated since the defeat. Perhaps he was waiting for a recount. However, Seattle's "exopolitics" examiner, Alfred Lambremont Webre gave quite an amusing rant. He equated this to an "ET go home vote". Mr. Webre states:

> *The Denver, Colorado vote functionally represents a rejection by humanity of the opportunity to become interactively, consciously, and proactively involved in a reported positive plan by intelligent civilizations to intervene by 2015 to cleanse Earth's atmosphere of excessive CO2, before inevitable collapse of the planetary ecology occurs.*

Wow....is he really stating that ET is not going to save us because of the city of Denver??!! If Mr. Webre really believes all of this, I think I can safely state he has no grasp on reality.

This initiative should be examined by UFOlogists as to what the general public must think about UFOs in general. They often like to cite polls conducted about UFOs but this is the kind of poll where people have to make a decision that affects them personally. When push came to shove, the voters of Denver decided that UFOs/ET were not important enough to use government funding. I wonder if Leslie Kean is paying attention?

The battle of Los Angeles UFO story

One of the most popular UFO stories that appears on the internet is the infamous "Battle of Los Angeles" UFO. Most of it is based on memories of individuals, who claim they saw a UFO/exotic craft/alien spaceship that night but is this really true?

Warm up acts

December 7th, 1941 is a date most Americans recognize with little thought. However, what transpired in the next few months on the west coast is not so widely known. In Hawaii, there was concern about an amphibious invasion right after the attack. In retrospect, that seemed highly unlikely because transporting sufficient Japanese troops would have slowed down the fast carrier strike force that attacked Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile, the west coast of the United States braced for potential invasion or air attack from Japanese aircraft carriers. Air defense units were activated and put on alert over major air bases and cities. Citizens began to look up for potential attacking airplanes and began to see them. Just one day after Pearl Harbor, San Francisco thought it was under attack by a Japanese carrier!

Oakland Tribune HOME EDITION

Jap Planes Over Bay; Daylight Alarm Given

New Manila Raids; Lubang Reported Seized

Anti-Aircraft Guns Roar In Philippines

WE'RE NOT FIGHTING JAPAN, LIPPMANN WARNS

British Rush Troops Into North Malay

Practice Air Raid Alarm Electrifies N.Y.

Navy Hunts for Carrier Off S.F.

General DeWitt, who was in charge of defenses on the west coast, was upset at the response by the community of San Francisco as they did not observe the blackout. He would remark the next day:

> *Those planes were over this community for a definite length of time. They were enemy planes, and I mean Japanese planes. They were detected and followed to sea….it is surprising the apathy of the people of San Francisco. Last night (Monday night) proved there are more damn fools in San Francisco than I ever believed existed. Only by the grace of God was San Francisco saved from catastrophe.* [1]

There never were any real airplanes from this "raid" but it shows the response by the military upper echelon to the news they were at war. After Pearl Harbor, it was better to overreact than not react at all.

Citizens seemed to have taken these remarks seriously and started to look up for potentially threatening aircraft. The planet Venus, which happened to be prominently visible in the west after sunset, became a cause for alarm. According to news reports in mid-December, Venus caused quite a few reports of enemy planes and the police had to assure the callers it was only a planet.

VENUS MISTAKEN FOR ENEMY PLANE

LOS ANGELES —(AP)— Venus gave police headquarters telephone operators a headache Thursday.

The planet gleamed brilliantly, and alert citizens telephoned in to report a flare over municipal airport.

"It looks like it's about 10,000 feet up," one man volunteered.

His estimate was short by many millions of miles.

Making matters worse for the military was the poor amount of intelligence. The code breakers were busy trying to figure out the Japanese codes and essentially were stumbling in the dark trying to figure out the Imperial Japanese Navy's next move. Meanwhile, the west coast intelligence seemed to be based mostly on rumors from the Japanese community:

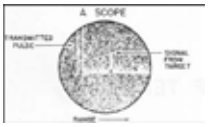
> *A Jap informant in Los Angeles, for instance, reported to Headquarters 11th Naval district that there was a strong rumor among Japanese families, presumably based on a short wave radio report from Japan, that on 18 February the West Coast would be bombed.*[2]

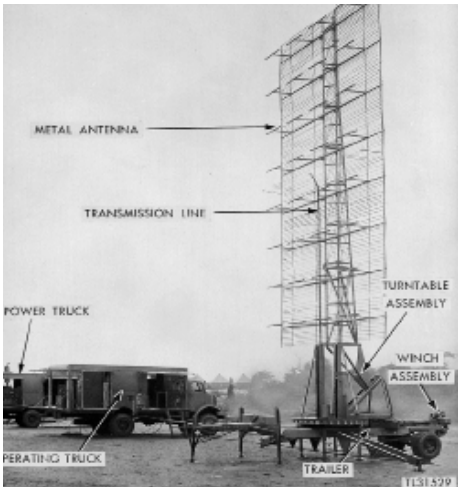
Starting the 7th of February, the west coast braced for potential acts of sabotage/attack. When nothing happened by the 18th, the alert was extended by General DeWitt to the 15th of March. Meanwhile, a report came in on the 23rd of February that an attack was going to happen that night. Not more than an hour later, a Japanese submarine surfaced off the coast of Ellwood, California and shelled some oil installations for twenty minutes. No damage of significance was reported but it fueled the concern by residents that the Japanese were planning something significant on the west coast. The stage was set for the "Battle of Los Angeles".

Air defense

The US Army had numerous anti-aircraft batteries by various defense installations on the west coast. They also had radar to help them detect intruding aircraft. However, this radar was not the fancy kind of radar people are familiar with today. There was no sweeping trace that plotted the echoes on a neat display. Instead, they were highly complex machinery that required several operators to obtain the necessary data of elevation, range, and distance. The two principle radars used in the Battle of Los Angeles appear to have been the SCR-270 and SCR-268.

The SCR-270 (pictured below) was a long range radar that displayed the signal for aircraft in what was known as an A-scope. It would indicate the range for a given echo but its direction usually was read by looking at what direction the radar was actually pointing. As a result, the operators could only notice that there was a target at a distance in a given direction but could not determine accurately how many targets or their altitude.





The SCR-268 (pictured above) was more complex in the way it was operated. It was to be coupled with the searchlights and anti-aircraft batteries. It was a short range radar that had three operators monitoring their oscilloscope display and operating their own controls. Between the three operators, they could determine distance, altitude, and direction. It required teamwork, training, and proficiency to have the unit perform properly.

The night of February 24-25th

On the night of the 24th of February, Naval Intelligence expected an attack within the next ten hours. They probably expected a repeat of the submarine incident the night before. After the alert of an expected attack, the 37th Brigade Headquarters received numerous reports of flares and "lights" near the defense plants and oil fields. After midnight, air defense radars began to report contacts. At 0200, one contact had been picked up 120 miles west of Los Angeles and seemed to be tracked coming within 3 miles of Los Angeles at 0227. At 0221, a blackout had been ordered. At this point, the batteries were keyed up to expect to see something and the "attack" began. The history of the 4th AA command documents the following sequence of events:

0243 - Unidentified planes spotted between Seal and Long Beach.

0306 - A balloon carrying a flare was spotted over Santa Monica. It was ordered destroyed by the Anti-aircraft controller.

0328 - A battery near the Douglas aircraft plant in Long Beach, reported 25-30 bombers overhead.

0333 - Batteries in Artesia fired on 15 planes that flew out to sea over Long Beach.

0355 - More ammunition was used over Santa Monica on what was reported to be another balloon.

0403 - 15 planes reported over the Douglas plant in Long Beach

0405 - Batteries in Long Beach reported firing at targets.

0409 - 15 more planes reported over the Douglas plant.

0413 - Another 15 planes reported over the Douglas plant.

0455 - A report was made that the Douglas plant had been bombed but not hit.

Based on this information, it seems that the activity started in Santa Monica, west of downtown Los Angeles. The media reported:

> *All of the action, clearly spotlighted for ground observers by 20 or 30 searchlights, was just a few miles west of Los Angeles proper....Anti-aircraft guns fired steadily for two minute periods, were silent for about 45 seconds, and continued that routine nearly half an hour.*[3]

Additionally, the batteries near the Douglas plant in Long Beach seemed to have added to the confusion. This implied that the planes were flying from Santa Monica to Long Beach and then out to sea. Considering they were protecting an important defense installation, it is not unexpected that they would have "itchy trigger fingers" once the "battle" commenced.

Aftermath

The media had a field day as the Army and Navy began to figure out what happened. The Army conducted an investigation, where they interviewed various personnel, who were probably very tired and confused about what actually transpired. In the History of the 4th AA command (available at the CUFON web site), there is a description of the reports that were made. Several reported seeing aircraft in various formations but none mentioned a single large aircraft. It was important to note that many reports indicated the SCR-268 radars used did not report any contacts even though observers were reporting aircraft.

The testimony of Colonel Henry C. Davis, executive officer and acting commanding officer of the 37th Brigade, was very revealing concerning perception issues that night. He originally thought he saw 10-15 planes over Inglewood but then decided it was just smoke from the anti-aircraft bursts. He opined that there probably were never any planes at all.

The Navy was the first to issue a statement. The Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, declared that there were no planes and it was a false alarm. The 4th Air Force felt there were no planes over Los Angeles and the Western Defense Command felt that many of the reports were exaggerations.

However, the Army looked at the statements by the witnesses and felt there was something to these reports. They concluded that at least one to five planes were over the city. The Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, would state that up to fifteen planes were involved. It was suspected they may have been flown by saboteurs with bases in the desert or Mexico. It was also suggested they possibly could have been flown from submarines, which had this capability.

The media had a field day with this "difference of opinion". This cartoon from the March 9, 1942 edition of Newsweek pretty much represents the attitude concerning the conflicting statements.

"When Doctors Disagree"

The media accounts

While the military talked to the various individuals in their command structure and some civilian personnel, the media reported what others saw and received all sorts of conflicting reports. Because the reports seemed to start in Santa Monica and have moved towards Long Beach, they guessed it may have been a dirigible because it took so long to travel that distance. This seemed to be confirmed by a Gardena air raid warden, who stated he saw anti-aircraft destroy a *"big bag that looked something like a balloon"*.[4]

While this report described a single object, many more individuals seemed to see formations of aircraft. Several reported seeing aircraft "destroyed" or "shot down".

> *During the blackout police telephones were busy with-reports that airplanes had fallen here and there...Another report, discounted by officials along with some of the others, was that gunfire had destroyed a big floating bag resembling a balloon high in the air.*[5]

Long Beach police were reported to have seen two waves of aircraft head out to sea. They also reported that several anti-aircraft bursts were near these planes but none were hit. When interviewed, Long Beach chief of police J. H. McClelland , who watched from the top of city hall, stated:

> *Personally, I did not see any planes. But younger men with me said they could.*[6]

While some saw aircraft or blimps, others saw absolutely nothing. Minard Fawcett of Redondo Beach reported:

> *My wife and I were certain we observed about 15 planes trapped in the cone of light from the searchlight batteries. Later we decided the smoke clouds had confused us and that what we saw were merely puffs of smoke from the shells.* [7]

Even binoculars did not seem to help some observers:

> *Don Black of Douglas Aircraft said he followed the lights with binoculars but could not observe the planes.* [8]

Time exposure photograph of the sky somewhere on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Photograph taken by Al Monteverde and published in Life Magazine on March 9, 1942 (page 22). The star trails indicate the photograph was taken looking south and show the constellations of Lupus and Centaurus. Based on the apparent positions of the stars, the time is between 3:10 and 3:30 AM (I computed 3:19am but there is margin for error). According to the article, the blur at left of center is an anti-aircraft burst. Notice how the beams tend to terminate at one bright spot where the beams converge. The longer exposure time captured the beams beyond these convergence points. There are no UFOs or aircraft visible in this photograph.

To add to the confusion of anti-aircraft bursts and 20-30 searchlight beams converging on spots in the sky, Anti-Aircraft batteries were firing flares. Byron Box, of the Pacific Coast Petroleum Industry's public relation committee, saw the display from Altadena. He reported,

> *Besides the anti-aircraft bursts, there appeared to be 10 or 12 huge red flares fired into the air.* [9]

Ted Gill, an AP staff correspondent, wrote:

> *Some awed spectators swore they saw formations of planes; others contended the objective looked more like a blimp; others said it could be - but they couldn't see a doggone thing.*[10]

Newsweek seemed to pick up on this report and stated:

> *Excited civilian observers reported that they saw planes in flights ranging from one to 200...Police said a large blimp or balloon had been seen blundering among the shrapnel bursts over the city. More cynical and quiet observers saw nothing at all.*[11]

The most interesting account came from Ernie Pyle, who wrote about it in his March 5th, 1942 "Roving Reporter" column. He was fascinated by the operations of the searchlights and commented how the beams appeared in the spot they focused upon:

> *They all converged into a big blue spot in the heavens. And that spot moved very slowly but very definitely across the sky, with never a falter. Of all the many straight blue lines shooting upward to that one spot, not one ever wavered, or got lost, or had to fish or "feel" around for the target. They held it and moved with it across the sky, like a leech that would not let go.*
>
> *I could not see anything in that spot, for it was some 20 miles away. But, I could see the anti-aircraft shells bursting around it. Now and then one seemed to burst right in the spot.* [12]

Pyle had experienced the events in London and was somewhat familiar with what these kinds of barrages looked like. However, the crews of these batteries and the civilian community had never experienced such a massive barrage at night and were going to make mistakes in identifying what they saw. Writing after

the war about the incident, William Goss would state:

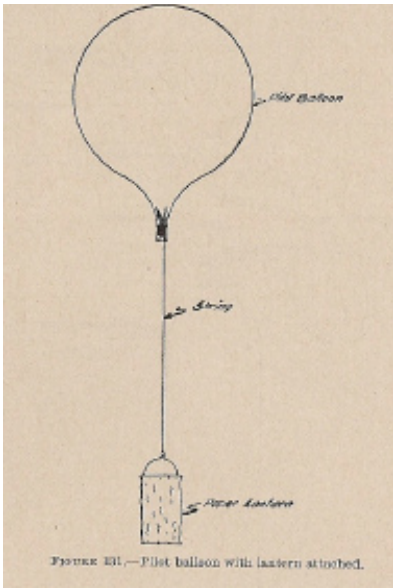
> *Probably much of the confusion came from the fact that antiaircraft shell bursts, caught by the searchlights, were themselves mistaken for enemy planes. In any case, the next three hours produced some of the most imaginative reporting of the war: "swarms" of planes (or, sometimes, balloons) of all possible sizes, numbering from one to several hundred, traveling at altitudes which ranged from a few thousand feet to more than 10,000 and flying at speeds which were said to have varied from "very slow" to over 200 miles per hour, were observed to parade across the skies.*[13]

It is most interesting that misperception, the same problem associated with UFO reports, seems to have played a critical role in this event.

The trip wire

The media reported that firing started around 0305. This is the same approximate time that the 4th Air defense command's history states that batteries in Santa Monica were ordered to shoot down a balloon with a flare.

Weather balloons launched at night usually had a paper lantern attached which contained a candle for visual tracking purposes.



A pilot balloon drawing from 1942 showing the attachment of a candle for night use. [14]

Just as things started to die down, another balloon was sighted at 0355 and got the barrage started again. By the time the gunfire ceased, over 1400 rounds of ammunition seem to have been expended because of two weather balloons.

In 1949, Colonel John Murphy, who was part of the investigative team, would write:

> *At brigade headquarters there was much gloom. No one knew exactly what had happened. Maj. Gen. Jacob Fickel and Col. (later Maj. Gen.)Samuel Kepner flew down from San Francisco and with the writer constituted a board to investigate the firing. We interrogated approximately 60 witnesses - civilians, Army, Navy and Air commissioned and enlisted personnel. Roughly about half the witnesses were sure they saw planes in the sky. One flier vividly described 10 planes in V formation. The other half saw nothing. The elevation operator of an antiaircraft director looking through his scope saw many planes. His azimuth operator looking through a parallel scope on the same instrument did not see any planes. Among the facts developed was that the firing had been ordered by the young Air Force controller on duty at the Fighter Command operations room. Someone reported a balloon in the sky. He, of course, visualized a German or Japanese zeppelin. Someone tried to explain it was not that kind of balloon, but he was adamant and ordered firing to start (which he had no authority to do). Once the firing started, imagination created all kinds of targets in the sky and everyone joined in. Well, after all these years, the true story can be told. One of the AA Regiments (we still had Regiments) sent up a meteorological balloon about 1:00 AM. That was the balloon that started all the shooting! When quiet had settled down on the "embattled" City of the Angels, a different regiment, alert and energetic as always, decided some "met" data was needed. Felt it had not done so well in the "battle" and thought a few weather corrections might help. So they sent up a balloon, and hell broke loose again. (Note: Both balloons, as I remember, floated away majestically and safely.) But the inhabitants of Los Angeles felt very happy. They had visual and auricular assurance that they were well protected. And the AA gunners were happy! They had fired more rounds than they would have been authorized to fire in 10 peacetime years' target practices.* [15]

The unit histories describe this order to shoot down a balloon so the basic facts described by Colonel Murphy are accurate even though I think the 1AM launch time of the balloon may not be correct.

William Gross also agrees with this conclusion in Volume I of The Army Air Forces in World War II:

> *A careful study of the evidence suggests that meteorological balloons - known to have been released over Los Angeles - may well have caused the initial alarm. This theory is supported by the fact that antiaircraft artillery units were officially criticized for having wasted ammunition on targets which moved too slowly to have been airplanes. After the firing started, careful observation was difficult because of drifting smoke from shell bursts.*[16]

Once the first battery opened up on the balloon, others joined in the "fight" and it became a free for all. The balloon may, or may not, have been destroyed. Anti-Aircraft (AA) fire in 1942 was not that accurate. The US Navy records for 3" AA fire (the majority of the gunfire was from this type of gun) indicate a kill rate against planes of less than 1% in 1942 (The US Navy crews in 1942 were more experienced and were shooting predominantly in daylight). One also has to wonder about how many crews set their fuses properly (or not at all) and what percentage of these shells were 'duds". In any case, it really does not matter if they shot the balloon down or not because once the firing started, the crews were firing at just about anything including their own shell bursts.

Evolution of the UFO story

In the early days of UFOlogy, no one, apparently, considered interpreting the "Battle of Los Angeles" as a UFO event. NICAP's 1964 Best Evidence document seems to have ignored it. The first mention of it as a UFO event seems to have been made as far back as 1966, when M. A. McCartney wrote a letter to NICAP about a red UFO that did strange aerial maneuvers that night. In the late 1960s, several books included the story at some level. Some simply repeated the LA times

articles on the events, while others added a few extra details. It really became part of the UFO chronology in the late 1980s when in 1987, Paul T. Collins wrote an article for Fate called, "World War II UFO scare". Timothy Good also mentioned it in his book, "Above Top Secret" released in 1988 citing an article written by Collins in 1968. Jerome Clark would include it in his UFO encyclopedia quoting from several 1960 sources. By the mid-1990s, the internet became the prime source of information as people dug for the smallest details in the historical record that supported the UFO version of events. These writings tended to omit the historical context under which this all occurred and only highlighted the portions they felt applied.

This was obvious in the 1987 Collins' article. It was basically a synopsis of the historical events reported by the media with an ET bias. The most interesting part of the story was one paragraph that seemed to reflect UFOlogical thinking on this case:

> *When eyewitness reports from thousands searching the skies with binoculars under the bright lights of the coast artillery verified the presence of one enormous, unidentifiable, indestructible object - but not the presence of large numbers of planes - the press releases were gradually scaled downward.*[17]

This is not accurate based on the historical record. Collins seems to have exaggerated the claim that "thousands" saw a huge singular object that night. The truth of the matter is that most did not see any sort of object, others thought they saw individual planes in formation, and some thought they might have seen a balloon/dirigible. There is no consensus on what was seen making it far from certain that a huge craft was present.

In recent years, individuals have stepped forward with their own personal stories of that night. Some of them were very young at the time, so the accuracy of these recollections have to be suspect. These memories may have been influenced by the one photograph that has become an important piece of evidence that a genuine UFO was involved.

The photograph

Probably the best evidence presented for the presence of a "true" UFO (with the implication that it was an alien spaceship) is the photograph that appeared in the LA Times, the NY Times, and Time magazine. The paper states it shows the searchlights focusing on an object over Culver City. It stands to reason this photograph was taken from Los Angeles and was looking in the direction of Santa Monica (the same direction as Culver City). Santa Monica was where the batteries first commenced firing at that pesky weather balloon.

Dr. Maccabee did a lengthy analysis of the photograph and determined it could have been an object behind the beams of light. However, we do not know what conditions existed at the time of the photograph (i.e. camera settings, film speed,, etc) and if the center of the light beams are not simply overexposed. Compared to the LIFE magazine photograph, it seems this image was not that long an exposure because no stars were recorded. It is possible that the original negative was underexposed and, in order to get a print that showed all the details of the faint beams and horizon, they printed it in such a way that overexposed the convergence of the beams. There are also numerous AA bursts in the vicinity of the area where all the searchlights converge. Either the photographer exposed his film at "the height of the battle" or there may have been some "artistic license" involved in order to make the photograph look more exciting.

As described in the unit histories, a great deal of smoke had been produced by these AA bursts. This smoke provided something from which the searchlight beams could reflect. Since searchlights are a circular beam, the beam would produce a circular appearance against a cloud of smoke just like this photograph, which appeared in Allan Hendry's "UFO investigator's handbook".

Searchlight beam against clouds [18]

Ernie Pyle even commented on how the searchlights formed a circle of light in the sky, which confirms that this is probably what was being recorded in this photograph. One can see a similar effect in this LIFE magazine photograph taken in 1939.

Searchlight exercise in the Panama Canal Zone. Photograph by Thomas D. Mcavoy for LIFE magazine.[19]

The lack of any UFO in the LIFE magazine photograph on page 19, indicates that this effect was recorded by this one photograph. A photograph appearing on page 8 of the Long Beach Independent on February 27th also showed no UFO but plenty of searchlight beams. Until other photographs surface showing this same object, one can not consider this photograph as good evidence of anything but searchlights converging at one point in the sky with the central area probably being overexposed.

A myth?

What was eventually concluded by the military officials and historians was that there were never any piloted (ET or human) craft in the skies that night and

that the cause of the barrage probably was the order to shoot down a weather balloon. UFOlogists seem to have latched onto bits and pieces from the media that confirm their belief that this was some form of UFO event. The failure of the unit histories to mention any large craft impervious to AA fire is something that seems to have been ignored.

The recent addition of witnesses who claim "they know what they saw" has spiced up the story. One has to wonder about how accurate their recollections are and why such vivid descriptions of exotic craft did not appear in any of the military or media reports. It is more likely what they are saying today are recollections based on all the activity that was happening in the sky that night. With a little urging from UFO investigators, seeing the photograph, and their own personal beliefs on UFOs, it does not take much to turn vague memories of the searchlights focusing on the sky or some aerial flares into a flying disc that was impervious to Anti-aircraft guns.

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I would like to thank Peter Brookesmith and Vincente-Juan Ballester Olmos for their assistance in identifying some sources for this article.

IFO University: Balloons

This issues subject is about an object that has often been mistaken for UFOs but sometimes laughed at when mentioned. A balloon is an airborne object that can, and does, result in UFO reports. Like the planet Venus, balloons get a bad rap from UFOlogy.

Toy balloons

Toy/helium balloons can cause UFO reports. In September, a balloon release caused New Yorkers to report a fleet of UFOs flying over Manhattan. Close examination of the videos confirmed they were balloons.

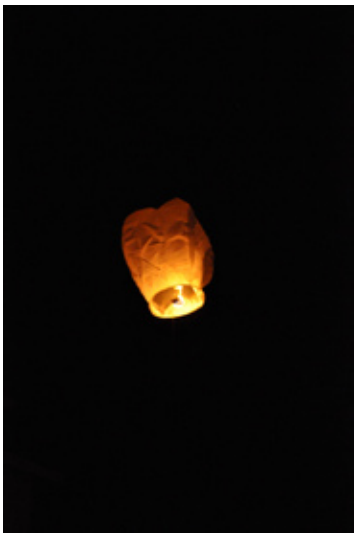
Isolated balloons can also produce UFO reports. I have seen videos of UFOs from Mexico that look a lot like balloons. Inadequate information prevents their positive identification but they certainly look a lot like balloons. A recent "UFO" in Reading UK, was considered unique enough for William Treurniet to conduct an analysis. Not surprisingly, he eliminated the balloon explanation because it was supposedly not moving with the wind. However, he only used surface wind data and not wind data from other altitudes. To me It looks and behaves like a toy balloon shaped like a number "9" or "6".

The key on identifiying balloons is to see if they are moving with the wind. There are several places one can get this kind of data. However, just because the winds are coming from the northwest at ground level does not mean they wil be that way at other levels. It is best to get radiosonde data from a nearby location if possible.

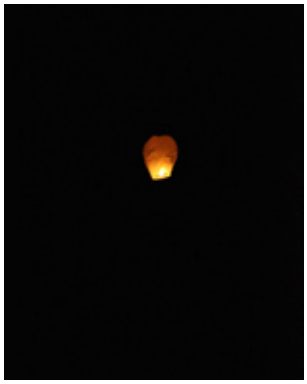
It is also possible that some balloons can have LED's or other illumination devices attached to them. This can produce some interesting results at night since the balloons would be essentially invisible to observers and the lights would appear to float in the sky. It is thought that road flares attached to helium filled balloons/garbage bags may have produced some of the Gulf Breeze "Red UFOS" in the early 1990s.

Fire balloons/Chinese lanterns

These are basically miniature hot-air balloons. The initial design was to use a plastic bag and some small birthday candles. These would heat up the air inisde the plastic and cause it to rise. The candles would also illuminate the plastic. The end result would be a floating apparation that would hover eerily across the sky. There have been many examples of this but the best one occurred in the Condon report case #18.



In recent years, the fire balloon has been replaced by the "chinese lantern". These are seem to be widely used in the United Kingdom but I have seen at least one of these at a fourth of July celebration. So, they can be seen in the US as well. The balloons are just modernized "fire balloons". The candles have been replaced by a flammable wax and the envelope is a bit sturdier. These are often are released by the dozens as part of a celebration. It can produce quite the display at night for unsuspecting viewers.

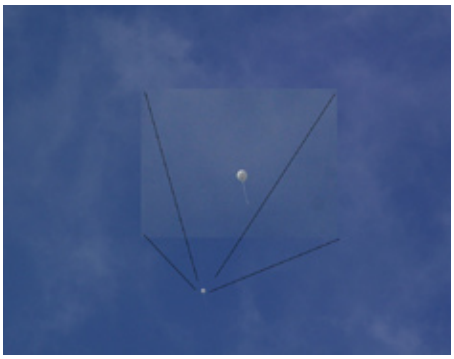


Weather balloons

Weather balloons are routinely released by weather observers in many locations across the United States. They are much larger than ordinary balloons and expand as they rise up into the atmosphere. As a result, they can be seen from some distance away.

To be honest, I never noticed them before and saw my first launch at an astronomy day celebration. It was very interesting and I followed it with my telescope for some time. I figured that would be the only time I saw one but I soon discovered they I could see them if I chose to go outside and look for them.

I was taking some daylight pictures one Saturday and noticed a white object floating through the clouds. I first thought it was an airplane but when I looked at with my 300mm telephoto, I saw it was circular. Was this my first UFO? I rapidly took some photographs and then examined them closely. My excitement quickly waned when I zoomed into the image to see that it was a weather balloon (see image below). One could even see the data package suspended underneath the balloon.



Research balloons

These are predominantly seen in the southwest US and can be traced back to New Mexico and Texas. In 2009, there were several widespread UFO events in Arizona and Texas/Oklahoma caused by these launches. One involved an amateur astronomer seeing the balloon low on the horizon right after sunset with a telescope. He was convinced he saw something truly unexplainable even though he was looking in the direction of the research balloon when it was visible to the observer.

Amateur astronomer Jeremy Perez of Flagstaff, Arizona took this photograph of the June 11-12th UFO/Balloon using an 8-inch telescope. The wide field view shows the star-like nature of the object on June 12th. Thanks to Jeremy for the use of his image. You can find more at his website: http://www.perezmedia.net/beltofvenus/

In the last issue of "SUNlite' I briefly discussed 'The act of loving UFOlogy' and The "Hill Star Map" in an earlier piece drawing some very unfriendly fire from a pro "Hill-Wilson Star Map" enthusiast who objected to my basic premise that Ms Marjorie Fish (The original Star Map researcher), was thorough and honest. I did not say she was correct, as my interests are not with astronomy. That is precisely why I sent Ms Fish's 1971 research notes to Mr. Printy who is knowledgable in this area of study. Also, my 'Sex and Saucer' articles seem to have struck some friends and associates as being a wee bit over-the-top, down-right malicious and not necessary to point out! I will respectfully remind my prudish friends my very first article in "SUNlite' was about "Light Pillars" (an atmospheric phenomenon) and a marvelous Belgium researcher named Wim Van Utrecht who is a multi-talented, objective researcher. It was not about saucer-love, the nostalgic Hill case or UFO-related sexual obsessions.

However, in this article, I shall refrain from the sexual and focus on "The Dark Side" of UFOs, Especially those cases which seem to have all the strange characteristics of a rock-solid "unknown." This should serve to quell the nagging suspicions that I have become a hard-nosed debunker and UFOlogical turn-coat that no longer believes in saucers. The only stipulation I wish to make in my defense is that I believe there is an IMPACT of a sighting experience upon the observer(s). That is my primary interest. I ask you, does that make more or less of a skeptic? I happen to have some very long-time friends and associates who are UFO believers and obviously embrace what they perceive to be 'Evidence' of a "Real UFO experience" as well as the ever-popular abduction malaise!

I guess these types of UFOOLogy should be discussed in-depth, but I have not brought it up in very much detail thus far because it involves 'Belief' and 'Faith' which should not be part of a semi-serious discussion on UFOs. But, psychology is definitely involved in the behavior of people as well as their beliefs… it is therefore fair game! So, if I should slip back into my thoughts on psychology from time-to-time I hope you'll excuse my brief lapses of self-control.

If you'll excuse a wee bit more of a diversion. I would like to mention that while I do tend to lean quite heavily on Jungian psychology I often do this to avoid Freudian psychology because it is very sexual at times. Moreover, there are many things about Jungian psychology I do not personally agree with. Yet, I do make use of Dr. Jung's brilliant concepts, terminology and similar symbolic examples in my writing simply because he researched and wrote about UFOs over five decades ago and his work has been largely ignored in many saucer circles. So, I feel he may be an excellent reference source. I do respect and admire Dr. Freud, Dr. Jung and many other giants of psychology. I think they were very great men of their times who perceived things through their prism of their unique personalities and circumstance. But, I have thirty-seven years of my own experience(s) in this sub-cultural field and desire to share some of it with others. It would be very foolish of me not to do so. In no way do I believe I have any concrete answers to the enigma, but I may be asking some questions of merit (?) I'll ask you to be the judge on that question. Also, I would like to mention I am not a psychiatrist, psychologist or UFO expert. However, in a previous article I made several errors which Mr. Martin Kottmeyer and others were kind enough to point out. I wish to thank them for the clarifications and sharp eyed attention to detail.

Matt Graeber

Twenty-First Century UFOlogy – VIII: Beware of the Dark Side of UFOs! A brief expose of the saucer lore, aliens and the abduction expert mythos

by Matt Graeber edited by Grace L. Graeber

We have all heard and read stories about how marvelously exceptional the UFO experience is. How it may be intellectually stimulating, spiritually enlightening and personally transformative – especially, when the little Grays, the Reptilians or the Insectoid creatures have selected an individual for cross-breeding experimentation, harvested their eggs or spermatozoa. (It seems having one's genes joined with those of a big alien bug is thought to be ' desirable' in many saucer circles!)

Yes, it is a truly unique experience. But, often times horrific and physically painful according to many abductees, UFO experts, and several top abductologists who have painstakingly figured out:

1.The covert alien agenda

2. That well over 100 different alien species or, types are currently coming to earth kidnapping people and...

3. They have also figured out much of the thought to be Black Magic-like techniques and technologies the aliens routinely employ.

Of course, these fantastic covert methods and highly advanced technologies are employed by aliens to locate specific victims and render them helpless before they are whisked away to a waiting spaceship. Oh yes, I almost forgot to mention…

4. All this, while the same abduction experts bypass the rather sticky issue of proving UFOs exist in the first place (It's sort of cart before the horse saucer-logic), not to mention regarding item number three (3), the Grays and some UFOs can also fly, hover, submerge, dematerialize and pass through a brick wall without being damaged; thereby, occupying the same space and time with all sorts of physical obstructions (much like the cartoon character Casper the friendly ghost). Since the Grays seem to also lack an opposable thumb (according to some of the reports) and cannot possibly grasp and turn a door knob a reasonable person might wonder how the aliens manage to construct their marvelous spaceships without grasping any tools?

Interestingly, thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of abductions are said to occur nightly (even in heavily populated urban communities). Nearly all these abductions are undetected, since the aliens also possess the rather remarkable ability to 'Switch-off people' which enables the alien's to kidnap the individuals they seek without being noticed or bothered by others who might be present at the time, thereby, avoiding interference or troublesome interruptions by family, friends, fellow employees, guardians, or angry lovers. Not only this, the little aliens can also instill screen memories in the minds of the abductees), masking and completely altering their true appearance and covert activities. They can also create lingering mind blockages of various types. Yet, they always seem to fail to instill such mental alterations to the consciousness of the book-writing abductologist's who frequently expose their covert activities at UFO conventions and on radio/TV programs informing many large audiences of the dangers of the alien presence on our planet . However, the expert's stories appear to be quite lucrative for a few abductologists on the very top of the UFOlogical heap because their yarns tend to titillate the sensation-seeking saucer buffs and cable TV viewers who are eager to hear more and simply chose to believe what they are being told about the so-called enigma!

But wait! There are many more contradictions, pitfalls and common sense stum-

bling blocks to the saucer legend. One is the Dark Side of the phenomenon which one seldom hears about. However, I have decided to write about it for 'SUNlite' readers with the hopes it may produce a small "Shock of recognition" for UFO believers who have happened to surf the many saucer sites and ended up here…. For these very fortunate individuals, I offer (completely free of charge), the equally exceptional and highly enlightening experience of NOT being bamboozled by a self-appointed UFO expert, as this article is penned by a mere student of the phenomenon who spent 37 years of his life, independently investigating, evaluating and researching phantom of the skies reports.

A clarification

It is also very important to note; I am not attempting to gain your intellectual favor, change your UFO beliefs or, seek your confidence for financial gain. You have the right to examine all the opinions on the topic, hold on to your money and make up your own mind as a fully-informed individual. That is what this article is all about, "full disclosure." However, it will probably not endear me with too many UFO enthusiasts.

CE-II's

As you may know, CE-II reports (Close encounters of the second kind), are said to involve some sort of residual evidence being left behind when a UFO has landed, crash-landed and perhaps, even dropped items to earth from an estimated altitude of 500 feet or less? 500 feet or less seems to be the magic number for CE-II report categorization yet, this estimate is almost always involves a mere optical distance guess by the observers and/or the UFO field investigators. (Are you aware 500 feet is a distance of 1 and 2/3 football fields back-to-back in length from goal post to goal post), and CE-II's are seldom a measured factor! Moreover, when it is possible to obtain a measurement the so-called 'residual evidence' which is found to be consistently very questionable in character or, as a scientific sampling (Despite the fact it should be 'extraordinarily unique' since it is 'allegedly' from another world). But, these reports are woefully anecdotal in nature and questionable! UFOlogists often include a sub-category for CE-II's it is… Ted Bloecher's 'Aliens sighted, without a saucer being seen' at all!… (Talk about super-stealthy (invisible?) saucers and grasping at straws to prove a point!) If no one saw a UFO, how certain might anyone be the witnesses hadn't misidentified children at play or, small human beings wearing some sort of uniforms, work clothes or, costumes? Not to mention elves, pixies or, leprechauns. (Just kidding!)

Though we are informed by abductees and abduction experts that the strange affects produced upon the abductees' minds and bodies may be considered as evidence and/or, somehow, beneficial to the abductees. The question arises… Whose benefit are we actually discussing? Solely the abductees', the aliens' with their 'Assumed' failing genetic pool or, the abduction experts' book sales, schedule of UFO conference lecture gigs and cable TV appearances… not to mention all the saucer-related novelties they hawk online? Yes, the saucer 'Entertainment business' is grand and blossoming! So, I think we can safely include the benefits for the UFO experts. BTW, should you care to learn a bit more about your favorite UFO expert, simply type his or her name in the little window of your PC's search engine function.

Sickened by the UFO dark side?

Perhaps, one of the best documented case of a UFO close encounter involving ill-affects being produced upon a witness was that of Mrs. Betty Cash's encounter with a terrible heat-producing, large diamond-shaped UFO which was being pursued by a swarm of military helicopters. After the incident Mrs. Cash developed some persistent medical problems which plagued her until she died on the eighteenth anniversary of her1980 UFO encounter at Huffman, Texas (reportedly from complications suffered because of her exposure to high-levels of ionization radiation emitted by the strange object.)

But, symptoms of a radiation poisoning (like that which was inflicted upon the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945) seem to be lacking with this claim since such exposure would certainly have produced death in a relatively short period of time. According to long-time pro-UFOlogist Mr. Brad Sparks, Mrs. Cash may have been exposed instead to some unknown chemical in an aerosol form? However, the incident was believed by Mrs. Cash to have involved a classified military test aircraft of some type and, Mrs. Cash was unsuccessful with her suit against the military in court. In other words, the case remains completely unresolved to this day and like the UFO enigma itself it remains highly controversial and expert opinions (Pro and Con) differ quite a bit on the matter.

However, Mrs. Cash was not alone at the time of her sighting experience her friend Vickie Landrrum and Vickie's seven year old grandson Colby were also present. They too, were said to have suffered similar ailments but, milder and for shorter periods of time. But, this is only one side of the Cash/Landrum story, there are also skeptical opinions, plus, other proponents who have examined data and feel it is very likely that Mr. Sparks has put his finger directly on the matter(?) Some of those researchers do not suspect the Hufford, Texas, UFO was a radiation-spewing spacecraft from another world. After all, how would living (as we understand the word), beings within such a craft or the pilots in the helicopters possibly survive the radiation exposure?

The UFO Pursuit

I was once a guest on the Richard Hayes radio program in Philadelphia during the1990's (Mr. Hayes was the side-kick of the legendary Arthur Godfrey a radio and TV personality of the 1930's to 50's) Anyway, when the call came into the Philadelphia talk show from a young woman who reported having driven her car at

92 MPH as she was relentlessly pursued by a fleeting UFO in New Jersey. She said the craft suddenly appeared about fifty feet behind her auto's right rear section and was no more than one hundred feet above t trees which lined the highway. The young nurse continued "You know, I was really scared to death they were going to catch me…. I mean, because they do all those horrible things to people they abduct."

She continued "I had never driven so fast in my life or, was so scared!" finishing her story as the Philadelphia radio station went to a commercial break. I had heard other woman express similar fears and apparent concerns about UFOs during UFO sighting interviews and while on field investigations. But, this was perhaps, the very first time they were spoken as incoming expressions of fears from the general public, broadcasted over the radio. Then, another woman called the program with yet another UFO-related fear she had long-harbored. She too, had obviously heard (and believed) the abduction experience is often characterized by mounting terror and the infliction of physical pain. Not to mention the abject disgust of being kidnapped and subjected to invasive medical procedures (while in the waking state) involving one's reproductive organs and genitalia!

The second caller to the Richard Hayes show said she never walked in certain areas where she knew UFOs had been observed and reported. Mr. Hayes had mentioned the existence of so-called 'UFO alleys' shortly after her call. Anyway, she explained she would not walk in those particular UFO areas without a husband! Mr. Hayes quipped "Yours or, anybody's?" She nervously chuckled and replied "Mine of course!"

Fears!

The point is, pent up fears of such intensity which adversely influence one's behavior and the maintenance of one's model of the real world are not healthy. Such fears may be quite dangerous to one's mental and social equilibrium. Especially, **IF** the fear is not justified because it is nothing more than the acceptance of a gross fabrication and rumor-mongering as fact, shoddy researching techniques and media hype. How many fatal auto crashes of mysterious circumstance might one speculatively attributable to UFO fears and over-reaction to misperceptions of prosaic objects like airplanes, helicopters, kites, smoke and birds, etc?

Recovering a 'UFO'

Carbondale, PA. and the dark side of the saucer lore

In early November of 1973, two young brothers at Lake Ariel, Pa, which is seven miles S/E of Carbondale, Pa, had been left unattended by their parents and intently listened to local radio reports about a UFO which had crashed in the neighboring community. Additionally, aliens from the ill-fated saucer were said to have been spotted moving about on the ground (rumors which were later found to be completely erroneous). The frightened boys armed themselves and decided to try to make their way to the safety of a neighbor's home. Along the way, one boy jokingly scared his brother and was accidentally shot and killed! A dark side tragedy fueled by mounting fears, completely unfounded UFO rumor and over-zealous radio news broadcasts.

Meanwhile, back at Carbondale, Pa, during the same 1973 UFO scare, a rookie policeman while in a recovery boat with several other officers was busy searching for the source of a mysterious light seen at the bottom of a large pond (It was reportedly the crashed saucer, but, was actually a prank perpetrated by three local teens to scare a girl). Anyway, the pole the cop was handling must have nudged the battery-powered trainman's lantern the boys had tossed into the murky water's depths earlier causing the lantern's light beam to suddenly shift, which the officer mistook as a light (i.e, a UFO), rushing towards the recovery boat! In what might be described as a knee-jerk reaction to the situation the officer panicked and opened fire at the oncoming light.

One is reminded of the hysteria the 30's "War of the worlds" radio drama (based on H.G Wells famous science fiction story), and possibly the harrowing UFO pursuit of the Bouchard family in Ottawa, Canada, 1973. UFO pursuits are not restricted to autos, trucks and motorcycles. Some aircraft pilots are also chased about the skies or, report chasing the ever-elusive saucers. Police are also not exempted from UFO pursuits and interfacing with alien creatures. The popular UFO literature is rife with such tales, but, in over six decades of countless incidents, no physical evidence has been brought forth concerning UFO reality! So, were these folks reacting to real world events or, imagined and nevertheless powerfully terrifying experiences of their own imaginations production?

Imaginary Friends

As children there was a dreadful bogyman lurking under our bed or, ready to spring at us from a closet. Are UFO abductions the adult version and dramatization of long-forgotten childhood fears, which have been reactivated and nourished trough media hype and promotions by book writing self-appointed UFO experts? As an adult, one realizes the childhood bogyman existed only in one's mind. But, at what point in one's adult psychological development as a thinking, reasoning, mature person might one suspect similar 'heightened fears' may be affecting a person?

As adults some of us may recall having imaginary friends and playmates, these childhood playmates seemed very real and oftentimes were given cookies, milk and candy by the children. Moreover, not all the imaginary playmates were human, some may have been talking animals like baby elephants and ponies, etc. Child psychologists point out the existence of a very soft boundary between reality and fantasy existing within the youngster's developing mind and, children often slip in and out of reality or fantasy at will. But, as they grow into adults the soft boundaries 'Solidify' and the person no longer sees his or, her imaginary friends.

Recollections

While at UFORIC I investigated a number of UFO sighting reports where children who were present during the event contradicted their elders. They informed me they were not convinced it was a 'real' UFO event, BECAUSE IT SEEMED TOO MUCH LIKE A VISIT BY AN IMAGINARY FRIEND, WHILE THE ADULT WITNESSES WERE ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED OF THE EVENT'S REALITY – HAD THE CHILDREN REPORTED THE EVENT MORE ACCURATELY THAN THE ADULTS?

21st century UFOlogy

I realize to some folks this is not nearly as exciting reading as a CE-III case with alien beings. My interest is not only in what might be and possibly propels a flying saucer but, what may make an observer tick as well! For I want to learn all about the UFO experience… doing so doesn't make me a hard-nosed skeptic or, debunker. It makes one an objective 21st. Century UFOlogist! So, while the above information on imaginary friends may not tell us anything definitive about any particular UFO case, it may be something to keep in the back of our mind when a child UFO witness contradicts what the adults say about their group sighting.

Of course, there exists a great deal more of the dark side to avoid. These fears and concerns seem to be more than appropriate when one considers that thirty-nine members of a UFO cult mutilated themselves, committed suicide and actually believed a flying saucer was skirting the tail of the Hale-Bopp comet coming to take them from this troubled world. They had prepared for their spiritually up-lifting journey by shaving their heads and castrating themselves before committing suicide. It is thought they wanted to appear something like the aliens which are reported to be lacking genitalia.

UFO religion, cult suicides, and murders

During the 1950's,'60 and early '70's there were churches of the UFO, reformed churches of the UFO and the firebrand preacher of the 20th Century reformation church in New Jersey who sponsored a TV show about UFOs as fallen angels and creature sightings as being manifestations of Satan himself. One UFO religion today is led by a former French race car journalist and test driver who received his divine calling from wise alien life-forms during his close encounter with a UFO while inside an inactive Italian volcano. He now enjoys a worldwide following of 50,000 church members and they embrace the idea of group sex among consenting adult church members including homosexuals and lesbians. Moreover, the abduction craze/phase of contemporary UFO lore has been repeatedly tainted by charges of the sexual exploitation of unsuspecting (often hypnotized), young women, financial scandal and other breeches of ethics. A few abductologists (i.e., Abduction experts), have been stripped of their professional license to practice psychology in their states by review boards of their medical peers. Several of these individual are still quite active in UFOlogy. Murders and attempted murders are also part of the dark side's story. The perpetrators of these horrible crimes have claimed 'Aliens had told them to do it' or, that they were 'Sparing' their victim(s) from alien abduction and abuse. I'll cite just two examples of UFO-related murders.

In a very tragic story from England a number of years ago, a distraught grandmother who feared her two young grandchildren were about to be abducted by aliens, stabbed the children to death in order to spare them the ordeal and suffering of an abduction experience. While, in the United States, a thirty-nine year old man pleaded guilty to aggravated manslaughter in the death of his ex-wife. He said he was trying to protect her from being kidnapped by aliens. The judge sentenced him to forty years in prison.

In yet another bizarre incident, a New York UFO researcher conspired with several other UFO enthusiasts to poison (using radioactive particles placed within their automobiles, toothpaste, and food) of three township officials whom the UFOlogist's believed were covering up information concerning a UFO crash. The UFO researcher underwent extensive psychiatric treatment at a maximum security facility and is presently no longer in custody.

The light

At a UFO gathering in Chester, Illinois many years ago a speaker breathlessly told those present of a great armada of UFOs which swept down from the sky, attacked and leveled their city on the spiritual plane. No one in the audience could actually recall seeing the armada or, the massive devastation. The speaker then, suddenly collapsed, fainting behind the podium having been overcome by sinister forces from outer space. While in Massachusetts, a woman claiming to be a UFO expert and practicing witch too, spoke about UFOs being on nightly 'Soul counts' in preparation for the spiritual warfare (Between the forces of the dark and the light), which she knew was imminent. While, at BUFO (Burlington UFO and Paranormal Radio) of Wisconsin, members of the group are said to be "Light Workers."

Psychiatrists' inform us some Schizophrenic patients speak of aliens or, people entering a room through the light, or, magically traveling through it anywhere they might wish to go. Others may speak of aliens shooting laser beams into their eyes in order to make them do certain things or, some behaviors that may also be controlled by small devices implanted in their brain by aliens! The preoccupation with the light or, traveling at and, beyond its speed is often central to UFO lore and group discussion. So too, are the alien's breaking of long-established laws of physics, time and gravity concepts. The UFOs are 'Assumed' to have the ability to confound physical laws with all sorts of highly-advanced technologies which seem to be black-magical or, miraculous according to one's spin on the subject!

Another Clarification

I do not intend to imply UFO all witnesses or, abductees are mentally ill. All I am attempting to do is point out there exists certain parallels and similarities between delusional and hallucinatory episodes of some mental patients and the UFO lore. Even the alien creatures are reported to have such fantastic abilities. They can pass through solid walls and levitate! Naturally, the dark side of UFOs is not always mentioned prominently in the popular press or, by UFO book authors who are not prone to be purveyors of detailed fact which is non-entertainment information. UFO belief can be a very dangerous pastime.

Naturally, UFOs (IF they actually exist as spacecraft from another world), are not directly responsible for the above mentioned crimes.... human beings are! But, these are humans who may ardently believe in and fear UFOs, alien entities and the saucer lore in general. Some even feel the UFOs are watching over us like guardian angels. These are very ill-informed individuals who may be attending UFO conferences, group meetings, abduction support groups or, amongst the researchers who are speaking at gatherings. One fellow at S/E Pennsylvania MUFON meeting was quite hostile, loud and very argumentative (he had a haircut like Mr. Spock the Star Trek TV series a character portrayed by the actor Leonard Nimoy). This MUFONite later firebombed the apartment building where he and others resided and then, committed suicide. Unfortunately, as a result, several long-time normal attendees of the MUFON meetings wisely left the group in fear of the changing make up, character and behavior of the group. Of course, as concerned parents and grandparents it might be advisable to prudently curb the enthusiasm of youngsters who may carelessly wander into the UFO abyss. Young folks and the elderly are very susceptible to misinformation, exaggeration, mysterious and sci-fi like false promises espoused by charismatic individuals. (Don't be bamboozled!)

It has been sixty-three years since the onset of modern-day reported UFO sightings of the alien creatures which followed in their wake. Despite great interest and much inquiry into in the subject by countless aficionados, many self-appointed saucer experts and scientific governmental authorities throughout the world, no one has ever proven UFOs to be alien space ships or time traveling craft from who knows where in the vast cosmic soup? In fact, NO ONE HAS EVER INCONTROVERTIBLY PROVEN A SINGLE UFO CASE to be scientifically genuine out of the thousands/millions reported.

Moreover, the so-called 'Evidence' which is presented is often anecdotal in nature and highly questionable in content - rarely worthy of in-depth scientific scrutiny. This is why I felt it necessary to write about the dark side of the saucer enigma, its lore and some of the over-zealous individuals who promote it as fact…. BEWARE OF THE DARK SIDE OF UFOS! Always keep in mind that the difference between UFOlogy and UFOOLogy is but a single vowel. However, OBJECTIVE UFOLOGY, often 'Misidentified' as debunkerism and skepticism is something else entirely.

However, believers see the many stories and the sheer number of the reports as 'Evidence' and 'Proof. Their argument's are grounded in the rhetoric of belief, faith, fantasy and unbridled assumption. Not verifiable evidence of any kind!

A final sad story

Then, there is the very sad story of a UFO writer and cable TV promoter who was asked by TV executives to produce a documentary about ghosts NOT UFOs. But instead, he decided it might be interesting to present a documentary on the alien ghosts of an ill-fated saucer crash that 'allegedly' occurred near Roswell New Mexico in 1947. He gathered a group of UFOlogists, ghost hunters, a spiritualist and psychics to participate in the film. The documentary was so bad the TV executives turned it down flat!

I received a copy of this 'Never-aired film' from a friend. I viewed the group of experts who were said to be people drawn from 'Diverse disciplines' (Thus, sounding very scientific), and was shocked to see them form a circle around an 'Assumed' but, completely invisible alien spirit. Then, they put down their cameras and other electronic equipment, held hands and began to pray to the alien spirit… In 1970 I had read a book by the late Dr. Carl G. Jung, a psychiatrist who was once heir-apparent to the famous Dr. Sigmund Freud. Anyway, Dr. Jung said UFOs and aliens were actually a 'Changing of the gods' (A new mythology), and it is becoming increasingly obvious UFOlogy is a growing religion of sorts. So, there is little reason to suspect a skeptical-scientific appeal to the 'Saucer Faithful" will be successful since for one group (The believers) it is a matter of deep seated faith and the skeptical group's arguments involve logic and common sense. In this sad case the "Fear' of the loss of a belief system is obviously dreaded! I have offered but a small sampling of the dark side of UFOs. However, the darkness has continuously popped up over the years and when not perceived in a lone article may make UFOs appear as a perfectly harmless hobby.

I was once a UFO believer and like many others and I was fortunate enough to see the light after a very short period of time. My goal now, is to spare others the disappointment and embarrassment of being bamboozled by those who are definitely NOT the brightest bulbs on the block! No one will ever solve the UFO enigma with a singular explanation, simply because it is not a product of a single cause! The 'Trick' for the UFO experts is to 'Keep the illusion alive' by insisting there is an ET presence in our environment.

To UFO Believers; I realize this has been a very long and boring read. But, ask yourself "How many tines do you need to have a brick fall from a crumbling building and hit you squarely on the head, before you decide to wear a hard hat or, safely walk on the other side of the street?.... You know, if you should find yourself in a very deep, dark hole the first thing to do is 'STOP DIGGING!'

Matt Graeber, ex-director of the Philadelphia-based pro-UFO Report and Information Center (UFORIC) 1972-1980, is a retired commercial artist and veteran presently residing with his wife of 42 years in Plymouth Meeting, Pa. Some of the case particulars mentioned in this article first appeared in a FATE magazine article written by the author over a decade ago.

EDITOR NOTE: Matt has made note that his articles for SUNlite are going to dwindle in the future because of his failing eyesight. He continues to provide me with articles that I plan on using in the future.

Rocket launches and UFO reports

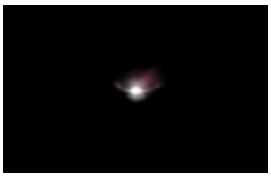
Last issue, I mentioned some meteor events that could have been misinterpreted as UFOs. I also mentioned two rocket launches from Vandenberg that probably did generate UFO reports. They did and I was surprised by the number of reports being made by people so close to Vandenberg Air Force Base. It was almost as if they were unaware that such launches even occurred.

September 17

An unarmed Minuteman III launch at 3:03 AM produced one report in the NUFORC database. The witness proclaimed this event would change his life forever. His description is consistent with a rocket launch. The photograph at left comes from the Vandenberg AFB web site showing the launch.

September 20

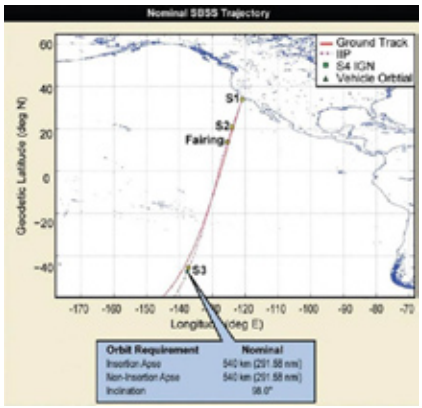
This was an Atlas V rocket launch at 9:03 PM. Sky conditions must have been good because one UFO report describing the launch came from as far north as San Jose some 200 miles away. This event also had an "expert witness", who stated he was a criminal investigator who knew how to make observations and interpret them. He states he saw it to the northeast at 9:15PM from Ventura but his description seems to match that of the rocket launch. The northeast direction is incorrect but a northwest direction would be fairly accurate. Several others described the exhaust plume encircling the rocket launch. Apparently, as it started arcing over the ocean, the exhaust gases and plume were seen together giving a unique effect as seen by this image taken from a youtube video by Toddbronco2



This was described by some of the witnesses as "comet-like".

September 25

This was the launch of a Minotaur IV rocket from Vandenberg at 9:41 PM in a south-southwest trajectory (photo of the launch above courtesy Vandenberg AFB web site). Most viewers near Vandenberg would see the rocket go up, reach a peak, and then turn towards the south as demonstrated by the ground track below.



The number of reports were interesting and all pretty much said the same thing. They described the staging event quite clearly as they stated they saw a bright light appear to "stand still" for a few seconds, then dim out and reappear for a few seconds before fading away. One of the NUFORC witnesses thought it might be a rocket launch but dismissed it because the object appeared to him to make a 60 degree turn (see photograph of this rocket launch arcing over above). A MUFON witness dismissed this as a rocket launch because he felt the object was moving towards the east before it went south. In all the cases, the witnesses were looking out over the Pacific Ocean towards the track of the rocket at the same time as the launch. It seems very likely they were all describing the Minotaur rocket.

November 5

This was a Delta II rocket launch of a Cosmos satellite. There were three reports in the NUFORC database. The witnesses seemed to be pretty excited about seeing a "craft" of some kind and went through the motions of convincing themselves that it could not be a rocket launch even though they were looking towards Vandenberg and the rocket launch was announced.

Back in the sunshine state

Having lived in Florida for many years, I am familiar with the hoopla associated with any rocket launch. Even the classified rocket launches seemed to draw big crowds and were often mentioned on the radio. People take time out of their evening to step outside and watch them. This may explain why I discovered fewer reports in two night launches from 2010. I sampled two Delta IV night launches. The first was March 4th at 6:57 PM EST. It generated no reports in the MUFON or NUFORC database. The second was launched on May 27th at 11 PM EDT. It generated nothing in the NUFORC database and only two in the MUFON database. The two in the MUFON database were made from Naples and St. Augustine, Florida. Both are well over a hundred miles away.

Don't forget Virginia

Wallops Island, Virginia is a forgotten launch area. They do launch rockets and missiles there and they do produce UFO reports. Probably the most

obvious case happened on September 19th of 2009. A Black Brandt XII sounding rocket launched the Charged Aerosol Release Experiment that created an artificial noctilucent cloud in the upper atmosphere. It was visible over most of the Northeast/Atlantic states. This resulted in about a hundred UFO reports in the NUFORC database and tens of reports in the MUFON database. The reports contained some exaggerations (one suggested the cloud was used to cloak the UFO) and the report times were not always accurate (some listed it as 2200). All of these witnesses were apparently unaware of a rocket launch/experiment being conducted.

Wallops island does not launch many rockets but they do happen every few months. There is a Minotaur rocket launch tentatively scheduled for 6 April 2011. I wonder if it will create UFO reports if it is a night launch?

Conclusion

It seems the farther away one is from a launch site, the greater the probability that it will be misidentified as a UFO. A good night rocket launch can be seen from over 200 miles away. The location of the observer in relation to the rocket's trajectory can play a role in how easy it is for the launch to be visible. The key issue with all of these reports are they were made at the same time as a rocket launch and gave the type of description one might expect. I pointed this out in my discussion of a May1978 UFO case in SUNlite 2-4 (page 9). In that case, it seems very likely a rocket launch was involved as the primary source for the UFO report but UFOlogists promoting the case failed to examine (or bother to mention that they examined) this possibility. Based on these case studies, using the "everybody knows what a rocket launch looks like" excuse is just not valid.

Missile or Contrail?

I was alerted on the 9th of November by Robert Sheaffer concerning a mysterious missile launch on the previous evening. When I saw the still, I thought it was just a contrail but after watching the video, I was sold it was a missile launch from an SSBN test firing a missile. I quickly looked at the DOD site for Notice to airmen (NOTAM) to see if there was evidence of a potential SSBN missile launch. Initially, I thought I had hit pay dirt where there was a NOTAM setting up area W537 for some activity. W537 was the same area where the launch supposedly occurred. I eagerly sent it to Robert Sheaffer and James Oberg. However, both caught my mistake when they pointed out the time was for 2000 GMT on the 9th and would not work since it was on the 8th the object was seen. I sheepishly acknowledged the mistake and looked closer but could not find any other NOTAMS. James Oberg suggested it was a contrail but I was not convinced since the clip seemed to show a bright rocket exhaust for a few seconds. I was really puzzled until James Oberg gave the link for Mick West's contrail science. The more I read, the more I was convinced it was probably just a contrail. The rocket exhaust I thought I saw was probably just the aircraft reflecting sunlight (I should have paid attention to my article for IFO university on airplanes!). It just goes to show you that you can easily be fooled by these sorts of things.

There were actually two aircraft that could have caused the contrail. The first was US Airways 808 flying from Hawaii to Phoenix. It was originally the prime suspect but further analysis of some images and other aircraft tracks by Liem Bahneman changed the culprit to being United Parcels Service (UPS) flight 902. His work is very convincing and should put the matter to rest but I doubt it will.

The military eventually concluded it was probably a contrail but the conspiracy crowd continued to howl "missile launch". It demonstrates that even video evidence can be misleading as to the exact nature of an "unidentified". People are going to see what they want to see and it should be a lesson for UFOlogists.

Of course, it did not take long for some UFO supporters to jump onto this bandwagon. The most bizarre claim came when Colleen Thomas stated that the Pleiadians shot down the missile because President Obama was trying to start a war with Iran. Thomas then stated the following night, Obama ordered another launch to shoot down the Pleiadians. Of course the Pleiadians shot this one down as well. Does anybody really take these people seriously?

Speaking of being taken seriously, Dan Aykroyd mentioned the missile launch on Jimmy Kimmel a month later. According to Aykroyd:

> *We had a very interesting sighting here in Los Angeles...we had a contrail....and they said it was a 747..if you look very closely at it, and we are going to get photo analysis of it done professionally, it's not a jet and it's not a rocket, it's an orb...it's an egg.... It's obviously a round object, not a cylinder.....*

Does MUFON really think this was anything more than an airplane or is Aykroyd really representing current MUFON dogma? If only Aykroyd/MUFON read my IFO university last month, they would have understood all the misperceptions being described here. Of course, MUFON/Aykroyd could easily go to Mick West's Contrail Science or Liem Bahneman's web site and see a wonderful analysis for free instead of paying for one. Maybe the only analysis they will accept is one that declares that it is truly unidentified and must be an alien spaceship. Aykroyd should stick to pretending to be Yogi Bear instead of pretending to be a scientist.

UFOs on the tube

UFOs over the earth: Mass sightings in Mexico (Investigation Discovery channel)

Last issue, I talked about this series coverage of the "Bucks County UFOs" and I was not that impressed. After watching this episode, my opinion of this series changed somewhat.

The show was about Mexico, which has been, according to the show, "A hotbed of UFO activity". However, James Carrion notes that there is really no proper investigations being conducted. The implication was MUFON might be able to conduct some quality investigations on some cases.

Arriving in Mexico, Carrion went to UFO central, Jaimie Maussan's television show. He showed them several videos. One looked like a model suspended on a string. However, there was one videographer, Arturo Robles, they wanted to see.

Robles showed them some of his worm videos, which he thought might be something living. To me they looked like balloons strung together and, I suspect, Carrion thought so too. When they went onto Robles' roof, they saw a UFO, which Robles recorded. Unknown to Robles, it was just a bunch of balloons sent up to see his reaction. They then showed the video to Maussan. Carrion mentioned that it gave him relief to see Maussan state it looked like balloons. I just found that sort of a ridiculous statement because, before showing it, they told Maussan it was only a bunch of balloons. It was not a good test of how gullible Maussan could be but we did see that in the next segment.

The next segment included some photographs that had been taken by Carlos Avila. Avila took some nice shots of a UFO over his neighborhood with a cell phone camera. The photographs were sent to MUFON's photo analyst, Marc D'Antonio. Right off the bat, the EXIF data on the photos showed two of the photographs were taken an hour apart instead of the minutes claimed by Avila. Even more damaging was that, after enhancement, the UFO had a nice little box around it indicating it was a simple cut and paste using a photo processing program. When confronted with this, Avila denied hoaxing the images and Maussan defended him based on his journalistic experience. The show then doubted that Carlos could have hoaxed them because it was too sophisticated a hoax! This sounds like the Ed Walters excuse.

Maussan chose to bring his own photo expert in to examine the photographs. Guiellermo Anaya's analysis was a lot of hand waving as he stated things like aliens could alter the EXIF data and the pixilation could have created the "box" around the UFOs. Carrion's response at this point was to basically throw up his hands and give up trying to convince them that it was probably a hoax. Once again, the show then let me down by stating, "Questions about the photo's authenticity remain unresolved"!!!! I think the show resolved this one but, for some reason, the producers did not want this debunked completely.

The show's final segment involved the town of Mezcala, which experienced an exotic UFO event. According to reports, a light passed over the city and then landed in the hills. This produced a power outage/fluctuation in the town. They created a simulation for the townspeople to see based on this report. However, the people stated this was not accurate. In fact, it seems everything they were told about the event was wrong! When they finally interviewed somebody who recorded the event, he explained to them the light was just on the hillside in the area where power transmission line towers existed. They could have saved a lot of time by talking to him but I guess the producers wanted to see some sort of computer simulation done. The light turned out to be an electrical fault in the power lines.

Carrion closes with the following statement, *"There are those of us in MUFON who want to solve this mystery.... There are other folks out there that want to perpetuate the mystery..."* It is interesting that, despite what Carrion states, the show did attempt to maintain the mystery. Despite this, the show was far better than the "Bucks county" episode.

Book Reviews

Buy it! (No UFO library should do without it)

UFO: The government files - Peter Brookesmith

This is a good starting point for anyone wanting to get a quick grasp of UFOlogy's history. There are far more detailed books out there that cover each case in detail but the layout gives a simple but effective presentation. The chronological layout quickly identifies the important events and personalities in UFOlogy.

Borrow it. (Worth checking out of library or borrowing from a friend)

Witness to Roswell - Don Schmitt and Tom Carey.

I dislike this book because of the presentation. General Sherman once wrote that he disliked newspapermen because they would hang around the soldiers listening to rumors and then printing them as facts. This book contains lots of stories/rumors from mostly enlisted men and townspeople but no real substance to establish true facts. Some of the stories even contradict each other. I only recommend borrowing it simply because it presents a lot of new testimony that may be worth examining.

Bin it! (Not worth the paper it is written upon - send to recycle bin)

The UFO Mystery: Solved! - Steuart Campbell

Steuart sent me a free copy, which I appreciated, but I was unimpressed. Mr. Campbell presents the idea that just about any UFO report can be solved by mirages and astronomical objects. While this may apply in some cases, I found it quite a stretch in applying this universally to all UFO events. Trying to suggest a star or planet (unless we are talking about Venus and possibly Jupiter) is an explanation for a daylight UFO sighting ignores the fact that seeing those objects in broad daylight is a challenge for even experienced astronomers.To suggest casual observers even noticed them undermines other cases where such explanations are perfectly valid.